Anatomy of Life

A Critical Study of 'Pangu (The Crippled)'- Maithili novel by Jagdish Prasad Mandal

Dr. Ram Ashish Singh

Pallavi Prakashan

Dr. Ram Ashish Singh

Dr. Ram Ashish Singh is the former principal and head of English department, H.P.S. College, Nirmali, a constituent unit of B.N. Mandal University, Madhepura (Bihar). Born on 5th June, 1950 at Biraul (Darbhanga) and obtaining his M.A (English) and Ph.D. degrees from L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga he joined Nirmali College, Nirmali (now H.P.S College, Nirmali) as a lecturer in English in 1973 and retired from the service as the principal of the college in 2015. He got his Ph.D. degree in 1992 on his thesis "The Central Ethos of R.K. Narayan's Major Novels." Later he guided and supervised Sri Ram Sudin Yadav's research work "Contributions of Wilfred Owen to Modern Poetry: A Critical Re-assessment" and Sri Virendra Prasad Yadav's thesis named "A Comprehensive Critical Study of Voice of Feminism in the American Women Poets During 20th Century." He has to his credit the publication of a number of articles in reputed magazines and research papers in journals. He is blessed with keen writing aptitude. His books 'The Crippled' English translation of original Maithili novel 'Pangu' and 'Pangu: A Brief Critical Review' have received widespread acclaim from readers. He has written prefaces to a number of books of literature authored by other writers. Being a good orator, he takes active participation in educational, cultural and literary activities.

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Dr. Ram Ashish Singh

Pallavi Prakashan
Berma/Nirmali

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A Critical Study of 'The Crippled'- Maithili novel by Jagdish Prasad Mandal"- A book of criticism and anatomy of criticism by Dr. Ram Ashish Singh based on the original Maithili novel 'Pangu' by Shri Jagdish Prasad Mandal and its English translation 'The Crippled' by the author of this book Dr. Ram Ashish Singh

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website: http://pallavipublication.blogspot.com
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DEDICATION

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep;
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

- Robert Frost

Dedicated

to
the highest ideal of
literary composition for
human welfare.

- Dr. Ram Ashish Singh

Preface

Literary criticism is the practice of analysing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature. It involves examining a text's elements such as its structure, language, themes and historical context to understand its meaning and significance. New criticism focuses on the text itself, analysing its formal elements and language without considering external factors. A novel is a relatively long work of narrative fiction normally written in prose and published as a book. The key elements of a novel are the plot, setting, character, theme and style. The literary criticism of a novel involves analysing and evaluating its various aspects. The purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of the work and its place in literature.

During my 42-year career of English teacher in Nirmali college, Nirmali, (now H.P.S. College, Nirmli) Supaul I taught books of different genres in English literature. While analysing, interpreting and examining the text and language of poems, dramas, novels, short-stories and essays in my class lectures I made the critical studies of those literary works. Such class lectures also included discussions of the principles of literary criticism. In addition to it, my own research work for Ph.D. thesis as well as working as a guide and supervisor to other researchers later was nothing but a practice of critical studies. So it appears to me easy, entertaining and enticing to write a critical study of the Maithili novel 'Pangu' written by Jagdish Prasad Mandal.

'Pangu' is a celebrated novelistic composition which has

earned the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for Jagdish Prasad Mandal already honored with more than a dozen literary awards including Tagore Literature Award. The novel is a graphic and picturesque descriptive account of the crippled agriculture-based economy of Mithila represented through Sitapur. We find here a varied and detailed description of the geographical, social, economic and cultural pictures of this significant region of Bihar. The novelist has thrown much light on the sufferings of the poor peasants caused by natural disasters of flood and drought and social and economic exploitation by the rich. The story of Devcharan and Haricharan has been presented in the simple rustic Maithili language spoken in the far-flung villages of Mithila.

Being a resident of Mithila and having been well-acquainted with Maithili language and literature I have read many literary works of Jagdish Prasad Mandal. The novel ‘Pangu’ impressed me very much with its vivid depiction and verbal felicity. I went through it repeatedly when I got an opportunity of writing ‘Preface’ to the Hindi translation book of this Maithili novel written by Rameshwar prasad Mandal. That very time I felt the need and importance of the English translation of the novel for widening the world of its readers and providing broad acceptability to its literary magnificence. I remembered that Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Gitanjali’ got universal acclaim only after it was translated into English. So I embarked upon translating this popular Maithili novel into English. My English translation book named ‘The Crippled’ inaugurated in the Saharsa literary meet of ‘Sagar Rait Deep Jaray’ in 2024 has received widespread acclaim from readers.

My first critical study of the book published in a booklet ‘Pangu: A Brief critical Review’ was inaugurated in the

Nirmali literary meet of ‘Sagar Rait Deep Jaray’ in March, 2024. This 36-page booklet in both English and Maithili language was completed in a short time for its inauguration in the meet. So the evaluation of the different elements of the novel was made in brief outlines only. In my address to the audience on the occasion I promised to write a full-fledged book of critical study of this popular novel in English later. I feel elated to offer in your hand the book of critical study ‘Anatomy of Life’ for your kind perusal.

‘Anatomy of Life’ comprises of nine chapters. The first chapter ‘Life and works of Jagdish Prasad Mandal’ deals with his life and parentage, his education, his communistic leanings, his social activities, his travels and his literary works. In the second chapter ‘Synopsis of Pangu’ a brief summary of the story of the novel is narrated so that a discussion on the different aspects of the novel can be discussed and analysed. The third chapter named ‘Critical Appraisal’ provides an overall review of the novel. The fourth chapter analyses an important aspect of this novel as being a topography of Mithila. The fifth chapter highlights another most important aspect of the novel, that is, the social, economic and educational portrait of Mithila. The sixth chapter reviews the novelist’s descriptions of the crippled agricultural conditions of Mithila life. In the seventh chapter of the book the novel is evaluated on the yardsticks of different five elements of a novel. In the 8th chapter the justification of the title of ‘Pangu’ is considered. In the final chapter ‘Conclusion’ a brief summary of this book of critical review is outlined chapter-wise and finally the title of this book of criticism ‘Anatomy of Life’ is justified.

While writing the book of critical study in English on the Maithili novel utmost care has been taken to balance accuracy

with readability and cultural reference. Some untranslatable words of the Maithili novel have been listed with their meaning and explanatory notes in the 'Glossary' at the end of the book. Although I have taken much care in thorough poof-reading, certain typographic errors may have escaped my searching eyes which will be corrected in the next edition. Valuable suggestions and opinions are cordially solicited from the readers.

- Ram Ashish Singh
Former Principal,
H.P.S. College, Nirmali,
B.N Mandal University,
Madhepura (Bihar)
Mob- +91 99316 63744

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Life and Works of Jagdish Prasad Mandal

Jagdish Prasad Mandal is one of the most renowned and popular writers of Maithili literature today. His contribution to the different genres of Maithili literature is so immense that he has been duly honored with more than a dozen awards including the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award and Tagore Literature award. He remains a charismatic writer with his swift penning of more than 130 books. While he has enriched the literary spheres of poetry, drama and novel with his numerous notable books, his constant publication of short story books resulting in 83 anthologies comprising of 1012 short stories has wonder-struck the readers with the unprecedented frequency of their successive publications. He has enriched modern Maithili literature with his minute depiction of the varied geographical, social, economic, educational and cultural aspects of rural life in his characteristic spoken language of the rustic people.

Birth and Parentage-

There is a village named Berma under Jhanjharpur sub-division of Madhubani district in Bihar. Jagdish Prasad Mandal was born in this village on 5th July, 1947 only about a month before the independence of the country. The village and the surrounding villages were known for the habitation of culturally advanced persons, although the occupation of the majority of the inhabitants was cultivation. It was only at the age of three years that he lost his father. The family being a

joint one had no difficulty in the rearing up of the child. In accordance with the prevalent custom of those days he was married at an early age and the second coming of his wife (dwiragman) was made when he was a high school student.

Education-

Jagdish Prasad Mandal started his schooling when he was admitted to the lower primary school of his village at the age of five. After passing from the school in 1956 he got his admission in the middle school of the adjacent village, kachhubi. For high School education he was admitted to Kejribal High school, Jhanjharpur which was later upgraded to Higher Secondary. He attended his classes daily with some of the students of his village on foot. Then started his college education in 1965 when he was admitted in B.A part I in Janta College, Jhanjharpur. After that he passed B.A Hindi Hons examination from C.M. College, Darbhanga as a private candidate. He got his M.A degree in Hindi from that very college in 69-71 session. Later, he obtained the second M.A. (political science) degree and with it his educational career came to an end.

Inclination towards Agriculture and Social Activities-

Instead of running after a quest for a government or private job Jagdish Prasad Mandal opted to adopt agricultural work along with vegetable farming for his livelihood in order to live a social life. To adopt cultivation as his profession even after getting higher education was the need of the family circumstances also, as his cousins of Harinahi village who actively took care of the agricultural activities of his family here at Berma after the death of his father now had to leave for their home. Jagdish Prasad Mandal had already got some

practical training of cultivation work. So, he had no difficulty in spearheading the agricultural activities of the family. His love for reading books helped him a lot in bringing a drastic change in the traditional farming system. He willingly purchased books on farming of grains and vegetables from Pusa fair or such other places. In addition to the advanced farming of foodgrains he laid stress on the new scientific methods of vegetable farming. His success in farming inspired other villagers to adopt advanced farming system which brought a new awakening of green revolution in the locality.

Jagdish babu was drawn to social work, as he saw many evils prevalent in the village life. The zamindari system and its excesses drew his attention first of all. The people of Berma panchayat were mostly poor, as the three *zamindars* were in possession of most of the 900 acres of land of this panchayat. These landlords lent money to poor peasants at an exorbitant rate of interest and on non-payment of the loan seized their landed property reducing them to utter indigency. Jagdish babu led a stiff movement of protest by the poor peasants of the village which compelled the so-called landlords to flee away from the village paving way to the recovery of the paternal landed properties by the erstwhile rightful owners.

As a matter of fact, Jagdish babu showed the practical examples of his active participation in the eradication of social evils and then presented them in theories describing them symbolically in his literary works. In both the ways he served the social causes and represented human values. When the matter of organising Durga puja festival in Berma village too arose, he organised a public meeting of the villagers and with a consensus view it was materialised. But there were differences of opinion on sacrificial offering (balipradan) which could be

negotiated with his mediation. The practice of sacrificial offering was not allowed in both the puja organizations of the village. In several other instances of the village issues he took deep interest in solving them and establishing social harmony and mutual love among the different castes and communities of the village. His image as a social worker is illegible on the mind of the people in his village and all around.

His Communistic Leanings-

Jagdish Prasad Mandal lived among the poor villagers, felt their miseries and pitied their sufferings. The social and economic injustices borne by poor masses infuriated him. His socialistic thoughts overwhelmed him so much that he joined the Communist Party of India in 1967. He began to take active participation in the party's rallies against unjust ruling and activities of the Government. In 1967 election he compaigned widely in favour of the party. Sri Bhogendra jha was elected M.P from Madhubani. After his oath taking, he addressed a meeting of party workers at Sakri. Jagdish babu along with some other party workers attended the meeting. Later Bhogendra Jha came to Berma and addressed a public meeting. Jagdish babu played an important role in the organisation of the meeting. Now he was very prompt in attending the rallies of the party at Patna and Delhi. He got opportunities of meeting with persons of different cultures and regions. He could purchase cheap books on different subjects of life. All this enriched his spectrum of knowledge on various aspects of life. With his vibrant communistic feeling Jagdish Prasad Mandal fought against feudal exploitation, government's wrong policies and capitalistic principles in the village and elsewhere. For this he was jailed several times. Most of his time was spent in dozens of police cases and journey to jail. The opponents in other

parties hatched conspiraces against the party and the party by then had a decline in the political arena. By this time Mandalji had got acquital from most of the police cases. It was in 2000 A.D. that he decided to turn towards creative writing.

His Travels-

Jagdish Prasad Mandal being a student of Hindi literature had read a number of books of Hindi writers. Now he developed a habit of reading the books of different subjects by famous writers. Soon he wanted to visit and see with his own eyes the eastern, western and southern states of the country and their cultures. First of all, he got an opportunity of going to Tripura where one of his friends, Kali kant jha, I.P.S was posted. At the request of his friend he went to Tripura in 1998 and travelled to most of the important places of the state.

Before his travel of Tripura Jagdish Prasad Mandal attended a four-day national literary-political convention at Hyderabad organized by the communist party of India. He could view the important historical sites of the city. With his craze for wide travels he visited Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh also of the north east. The economic capital of India, Mumbai, Shanti Niketan of Rabindranath Tagore, Sunder Van, Gangasagar and the Sun Temple are some of the important places which he visited in course of time. Then he went to Rajasthan where his maternal nephew worked in a cement factory. In his travels to the different places of the state he could have the first-hand knowledge of the life-style and cultural heritage of the places. Finally, in 2012 he enjoyed a pleasant tour of kerala when he was called for being honoured with Tagore literature Award at Kochi for his 'Gamak Jinagi', an anthology of short stories.

His literary works-

After 2000 A.D. Jagdish Prasad Mandal took to writing books of literature. But it was in 2005 A.D. that after being completely acquitted in the judgement of the last court case he began to devote himself heart and soul to the composition of literary books of different genres. In the beginning he faced difficulties in the publication of his books. But it did not deter him from writing continuously. It was in 2008 A.D. that Jagdish babu got an opportunity to present himself on a literary dais where he met the editor of a Maithili magazine of Patna 'Ghar-Bahar', Dr. Ramanand jha 'Raman'. Dr. Raman was very much impressed with his story 'Bhentak Lava' which he published in his magazine. After sometime his another story '*Bisandh*' was published in the magazine. Soon, his story 'Chunwali' was brought to publication in the magazine 'Mithila Darshan' edited by Dr. Udaynarayan Singh 'Nachiketa'. All these three stories were highlighted with their publications in 'Videha' magazine edited by Sri Gajendra Thakur. His five books including three novels, one story book and one drama were published, first of all, by Shruti Prakashan, New Delhi in 2008 A.D. free of cost and by 2013 as many as twenty seven books written by him were published from this famous publication. Later Pallavi Prakashan, Nirmali (Supaul) come forward to publish all his other books.

In November, 2008 Jagdish Prasad Mandal participated in the 64th three-monthly literary meet of Maithili story-writers 'Sagar Rati Deep Jaray' held at Rahua Sangram village of Madhubani district and convened by Dr. Ashok kumar Jha 'Avichal'. Since then, he has been regularly attending this literary convention which aims at promoting and strengthening Maithili literature by encouraging new writers and honoring

great writers. In 2010 the meet was organized by Jagdish Prasad Mandal at his village, Berma with much interest and sincerity. This literary meet is distinctly remarkable for certain features. Firstly, the name of the next meeting place is willingly proposed by a lover of Maithili literature which is unanimously accepted by the participants. Secondly, the newly published Maithili books can be ceremoniously released for public reading from the dais of the convention by the renowned literary stalwarts at the request of the writers. All the 130 books written by Jagdish Prasad Mandal in different genres of literature got lokarpan (inauguration) from this literary platform.

The wide world of Jagdish Prasad Mandal's literary works consists of 82 anthologies of short stories, 20 novels, 11 dramas and 12 anthologies of poems. Some of the notable short story anthologies are 'Gamak Jinagi', 'Swatrantra Vyaktitwa', 'Vishwa Shanti' and 'Vicharak Mor'. Some of his famous novels are worth mentioning namely 'Maulayal Gachhak Phool', 'Uthaan Pattan', 'Jivan Sangharsh' and 'Pangu'. Similarly, 'Mithilak Beti', 'Panchvati' and 'virangana' are the most popular of his plays. Among his poetry books the most notable can be listed as 'Indradhanusi Akash' 'Gitanjali', 'Kamadhenu' and 'Akas Ganga'.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal is a realistic writer. He gives expression to his realistic experiences in different genres of literature. Literature is defined as a mirror of society. Following the ethics of this literary principle he lays stress on the realistic depiction of the socio-economic life of the people of our state, particularly Mithila. The pitiable plight of the have-nots caused by both the natural disasters and man-made social and economic discrepancies forms the main theme of his literary

works. His long association with communist thoughts and activities helped him in understanding the social structure and the ills and evils prevalent in it. He voiced the causes of the poor peasants and the downtrodden of the society. He highlighted the curses of the inherent caste feeling, superstition, feudal exploitation and political corruptions. He not only exposed the problems but also revealed their causes before the readers.

A writer's unique style is often considered a reflection of his or her individual voice and perspective. As Jagdish Prasad Mandal portrays the social life and aspirations of the lower middle class Maithil society, he makes realistic usage of their spoken language in his works. His descriptive style of simplicity is distinct from other writers. He has left a stamp of his personal identity in his style. He prefers to write long contextual comments and referential details in his stories and novels. Such descriptions are the gems of thought which are very valuable for the readers. ❑

Synopsis of 'Pangu'

A novel is a piece of long narrative in literary prose. Narrative prose is meant to entertain and tell a story. It is a description of a chain of events which includes a cast of characters, a setting and an ending. It deals especially with human experience through usually connected sequence. Theoretically, a novel consists of five elements- setting, plot, characterization, theme and style. A novelist may emphasise particular elements in his fictional work. Plot is the skeleton of a novel. Before discussing in details 'Pangu', the Sahitya-Academy awarded novel of Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal on the basis of different literary criteria let us have a bird's eye view of the plot, that is, the chronological sequence of events of the novel.

Sitapur is a village situated in the heart of Mithila. It is an old village, its origin dating back to about eight hundred years ago when two families came and settled on the bank mounds of the two streams here. Later many others came there and started cultivation work. Today this village known as Sitapur has the area of one thousand *bighas* (acres) of land and shelters eight hundred families of about five thousand people. In the infrastructure of the village, we can view a blend of antiquity and modernity. The village is flanked by two seasonal streams. In its different kinds of soil-from best to worst- various sorts of grains, fruits, flowers, vegetables are produced. In numerous lakes, ponds and ditches fishes of several varieties differing in size, colour and taste are available.

In Sitapur there lives a peasant named Devcharan having a long ancestral lineage. He has got three *bighas* of cultivable land for the last five generations. During his father's period those three *bighas* of land is auctioned for non-payment of land revenue and purchased by a wealthy person of the village. The land-owner allows him to till the land on the condition that he will give one fourth of the harvest to him. Later there comes an offer to Devcharan to purchase the land on account of a quarrel in the landowner's family. The landowner's three sons, Singheshwar, Gaurinath and Shivshankar quarrel with one another for their wealth and landed property. Although the issue of dispute is family- matter but the villagers relate the matter with the elder son's inter-caste marriage with a prostitute at the age of sixty in spite of having a wife and children. The marriage is denounced and opposed by the family members and also village people. The family feud results in the family members' decision to give back the auctioned land to the peasants for a fixed nominal price. The offer is gladly accepted by a great number of peasants who had lost the ownership of their paternal landed property.

So far Devcharan has been working hard by cultivating the land on the terms of share-cropping to provide sustenance to his family members. Along with it he has tended a cow which has given birth to a pair of calves. At the offer of getting back his land he sells the pair of calves and purchases the land of the ancestor earlier anctioned for one hundred and fifty rupees.

Devcharan's son, Radhacharan is inert and dull. He has no skill to perform farming work and even shirks from work. Devcharan tries his best to cure him of his inertness but man is a slave to his nature which decides the course of his life.

Whenever *kirtans*, astayam and *navah* (group devotional songs) are organized anywhere in the village Radhacharan reaches there without any intimation to his parents. He avails the food facilities of those places. In the same way he sneaks away from the family to attend any dance-shows, feasts and banquets in the village. Radhacharan shows no signs of improvement in spite of Devcharan's utmost efforts. Devcharan conducts his family and his activities with his own thinking without any conceptual struggle but he visualizes certain impediments. He becomes uneasy to think of the uncertain and insecure future well-being of the coming generation.

Devcharan heaves a sigh of relief from his anxiety over his descendent lineage when he is blessed with a grandson in 1940. His birth brings a ray of hope for him. On the sixth day of the birth of the child the ladies of the house ceremoniously perform the ritual of writing the child's fortune and wish that the child may live long and maintain the family even by working in other's fields and earning wages. The child named Haricaharan grows in years and the grandfather gets him admitted in the only lower primary school of the village. Haricharan passes middle school examination from the school of nearby Rohitpur village. As there exists a high school at Nandpur at a distance of ten miles and hostel- lodging is compulsory there, Haricharan cannot go for high school study for want of financial means.

Devcharan is now over sixty on account of which he is not physically as active as earlier. The dwindling agricultural activities result in lower harvest products. Viewing his deteriorating health, he decides to train his grandson with the art of farming. He wants that he should follow his footprints

and take over from him the reins of the family management to shoulder the burden and responsibilities of the family. Devcharan's parental counselling and his valuable guidelines form the major portion of the plot. The novelist presents a detailed conversation between the grandfather and the grandson as the ideal teachings of life's philosophy. Devcharan instructs Haricharan about the importance of perseverance which the latter follows to the letter and spirit. He pledges to dedicate himself to the progress of the family and the nation at large.

Devcharan begins his counselling class with his placid address,

"My child, I have shouldered the responsibility of the whole family by this time but now I don't have might which the family needs. So…"

At this Haricharan responds with filial affection, "But you are our guide and mentor. You are like the trained polar ox in the thrashing of paddy and wheat crops, while we are like middle and fringe oxen to make rounds at your leaderdship."

Devcharan has seen with his own eyes the freedom struggle of the country. He has seen Gandhiji's champaran satyagraha and the issue of indigo cultivation. Now with the freedom of the country he is proud to see himself as a free peasant of a free country. He has also experienced the prosperity and adversity of his family. He undergoes a conflict of thoughts. On one hand he is glad to think that his grandson, Haricharan is the hope of the future, on the other he thinks that it is unjust and improper to throw the burden of family responsibilities on the shoulder of a tender-aged person. He overcomes the conflict with the sweet hope that Haricharan even at the age of fourteen or fifteen with his sturdy physique

and wise thoughts can face any emergent situations. At this thought his spirit of gaiety soars high in the sky. Brooding over the transience of life he fears that he may give up his ghost very soon. So, he proposes a family meeting in the evening to think over the future plan.

In the evening when Haricharan, his mother and grandmother assemble at the outhouse at the call of Devcharan the patriarch initiates the matter with his suggestions that in a family everyone should have the knowledge of each and every work. He tells them that he has got sixty-year experience of the family life. So, it will be better for them to know it in short as introduction. At this Haricharan aptly replies,"Baba, the past of the family is gone, so we cannot see it from the present viewpoint, but as the present stands on the past and looks forward to the future, we have to take hold of the present strongly."

Devcharan is satisfied with the fast-growing wisdom in Haricharan. He now reveals his intention,

"Dear Hari, so far, we have got a crippled family history… but now I find that I lack the strength to lead the family… you have to do away with the helplessness of the family and make the family as happy and free as a bird flying in the sky."

Devcharan reviews his dwindling physical strength on account of his age and plans to fulfil one of the most important parental duties of getting Haricharan married before breathing his last. He knows that Radhacharan lacks consciousness to perform this paternal obligation, so he contemplates to trace out an active girl for the wedding of his diligent grandson so that the next generation will have satisfactory sustenance. He decides to get him married in such a village of Mithila region

where a family of marginal peasants like him live. He wants that all the members of the family should have the work culture of making tireless efforts to ensure their secure future. He becomes very glad to find an agriculturally industrious girl in a village farmer's family of Samastipur district. He solemnises the marriage of his 16-year-old grandson with a girl of the same age named Parmesari.

Devcharan has so far engaged Radhacharan in the tending of a pair of buffaloes. In course of time, he shows some signs of improvement in his habitual laziness. He shows love for his family which is displayed in the improvement of his earlier vagrant life. Devcharan prompts him to do other activities now. He nourishes a sweet hope that Haricharan will follow his footprints. Although Devcharan has a crippled agricultural life in spite of being an expert in it, he understands the reason behind the crippledness and struggles hard to fight with it. He steers clear through thick and thin, shouldering the yoke of the family cart. Finally, he breathes his last, leaving the footprints of his life for Haricharan.

After the death of Devcharan Haricharan with the active support of his wife brings a drastic change in the old agricultural process. Time glides and after fourteen years of Devcharan's death Haricharan attains the age of thirty-two years and has three children. His father, Radhacharan reaches the fourth stage of his life. There is a renaissance in the name of green revolution. The traditional system of agriculture is totally changed. Haricharan accepts the challenge of crippledness prevalent in agricultural field. He works hard in agricultural field in the shivering cold, scorching sunrays and frightening thunder. He exchanges his three *bighas* of ancestral land with the peasants of the village knowing it well that

fragmentation of plots creates hindrance in the proper farming. So, first of all, he arranges the consolidation of plot. For this he willingly accepts the loss of half a *bigha* of land. He uses modern means of cultivation and improved hybrid seeds. He installs a four-inch boring and a five-horse-power engine to irrigate the crops. The entire plot of two and a half *bighas* of land is categorically and scientifically farmed with full dedication and perseverance by both husband and wife. He gets enough food grains, fresh vegetables and sweet fruits to feed his family and also earns money by selling surplus products to meet the other needs of the family.

Haricharan follows the footprints of his grandfather. He understands how crippledness grips all those associated with the occupation of agriculture in Mithila region which promotes exodus of working persons in large number from villages to cities and other states to earn their livelihood. But he faces the handicaps in the way and achieves grand success in proving himself the best agriculturist. With his hard labour and new thoughts, he becomes a model for farmers, 'Kisanbrind'.❑

Critical Appraisal

'Pangu' is a novelistic composition of literary excellence. It is authored by popular Maithili poet, novelist, playwright and story-writer, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal. The writer, a 76-year-old resident of central Mithila learns the ins and outs of the entire region through the long span of his agricultural life and gives expression to his realistic experiences in different genres of literature. By virtue of his sensitivity to social activities, love of communist ideas and wide travels he studies and attains the broad understanding of the subtleties of life. His experiences and feelings are displayed in his rainbow-world of literary works. His rapid flow of literary creations is unprecedented. With more than one hundred published books in different genres of Maithili literature he remains one of the most acclaimed Maithili writers. He has got the honour of being awarded with about a dozen prizes including Tagore Literary Award and Sahitya Academy Award.

'Pangu' has emerged as a superb literary work in Maithili literature. The peer team of the Sahitya Academy, New Delhi perceived and acknowledged the literary excellence of the novel and awarded it with the honour of the 2021 Sahitya Academy award. The novel is a Mithila-Darshan, an overview of Mithila. The novelist has artistically presented a varied and detailed description of the geographical, social, economic and cultural scenario of this significant region. It is no exaggeration to state that the novel is a topography of the entire Mithila region represented through the village of Sitapur. The novelist

narrates that the northern border of Mithila is beautifully fenced by the mountain ranges which are diversified by both the greater Himalayas and Kailash plateau with lovely Mansarover lake in it. Again, the southern border of Mithila is built by a group of rivers including the sacred Ganga which has holy banks like Sultanganj and Simariya ghats. The real charm of the novel lies in the fauna and flora of Mithila signifying the dictum that literature is the mirror of society.

As a matter of fact, the novelist has laid much stress on the realistic depiction of the socio-economic life of the pre-independence and post-independence Mithila. Such an immensely detailed, varied and vivid portrayal of Mithila with the portraits of different facets of Mithila life in one novel is rare. One can view the curious blend of the old and the new concepts regarding the existing living conditions of the region. In the novel the writer himself comments-

"vaicharik rup me akhno ham Mithilak o rup dekhiye rahal chhi je adauk chintan-dharakak anukul achhi. Tai ham sabh ajuk Mithilak chitrankan jan nai karab tan khali jadu tona wa chhu-mantar kahi dela san bhay jayat, e sambhav nahi achhi. Hajar lakh pahiluka *Satyug Treta* san nikail aaya ham sabh ekaisam sadi me pahunch chukal chhi." (Theoretically, even now we can see the picture of Mithila which reflects the old stream of thoughts. So, if we do not depict modern Mithila, it is not possible to be successful by using magic spells or incantation. We have reached the 21st century after passing through thousands of years of old *Satyug* or *Treta* age.)

Presenting the socio-economic panoramic portraits of Mithila the writer throws vivid light on the fauna and flora of the region. He says that Sitapur with almost a thousand acres of land, ponds, lakes and rivers produces all kinds of grains,

fruits and vegetables. Different kinds of fishes, domestic animals, trees, flowers and fruits are graphically described. The detailed lists of all these things are the testimony of the writer's intimate knowledge from his real-life association before holding the writer's pen. It is very interesting to read the anecdote of the former agriculture minister of India, Sri Chaturanan Mishra's talk with the Supremo of Poland about the varieties of mango fruits presented dramatically. During his visit to Poland the Indian minister retorted to the Polish supremo who boasted of the greatest varieties of fruits in his country. He said, "Your country does not produce an iota of the fruits produced in our country." When the Polish supremo raised his eyebrow in disapproval, the two agreed to name their fruits one by one. The Indian minister repeated the name of mango fruits and explained "In our country the mango fruits have numerous varieties on the basis of the characteristics of different appearances, varied shapes, various colours and their distinct tastes like other fruits."

The novelist provides an analytical description of the caste system, untouchability and superstition prevalent in the village of Sitapur. About twenty-five castes divided into upper, middle and lower levels are sheltered here. The middle castes are ahead of others in population. Although there is a social unity among all the castes, the feeling of discrimination becomes obvious on the occasion of marriage celebrations and community feasts. The feeling of caste and communal distinction has been in existence since long past. Some lower castes are regarded untouchable, resulting in an atmosphere of rifts and dissensions. Like other villages of Mithila Sitapur is seized with superstition on account of ignorance. Many superstitious and conservative ideas grip the village which come in the way of new ideologies. The writer has sarcastically

mentioned the chanting of mantras and Bhagait as a remedy of ailments and the ceremonious play of Jat-Jatin as an invocation to the god of rain to bring an end to the drought.

The novelist highlights the wretched economic plight of the majority of villagers. He is aggrieved to find a vast gap between the haves and have-nots. Mostly people subsist on agriculture here. Most of the people are either landless or holders of a few acres of land. Only five families of Sitapur possess about thirty percent of the total one thousand *bighas* of land in the village. The poor peasants are made victims of exploitation and oppression by the land-lords and moneylenders. The sharecropping and tenancy system is designed to make the poor poorer and the rich richer. The writer vividly describes the miseries of the helpless lot, landlordism, monkery (mahantgiri) and the poor people's cry for justice in their movements of *sikmi batai*, *bakast* land and ceiling land to the tillers. He enlists our sympathy for the hungry masses by his exclusive narration of their pitiable plight. Hundreds of landless families do not get adequate farm-work to earn their livelihood. So they take recourse to exodus to other states for sustenance. The writer deplores that now when all the facilities of basic needs are available in cities and towns, thousands of villages like Sitapur have nothing to utilize the physical and mental manpower of the workers.

Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal points out that the natural disasters like the flood and drought add injury to the wound of the poor masses. The ravages of the *Kosi* and the *Kamla* made the villagers homeless and hungry every year before independence. After independence when embankments were made, there was no permanent relief, as the breaches of the embankments created more hazardous situations. The *Kosi*

flood of 1958 not only made them homeless but brought them to the verge of starvation. In the drought of 1967, many persons starved to death while a great number of the poor villagers saved their lives by unearthing and eating *bisandh*, the root of a watery plant. The sensitivity of the writer gives vent to the feeling of the crying need of improvement in the living conditions of the economically handicapped villagers of Mithila.

The writer, with his leaning towards the communist philosophy of economic equality, shows his concern for the hapless class of the poor and aggrieved. He highlights their wretched plight when he describes how many poor families pass their rainy and cold nights in their cottage-like dwellings made of wood and straws. Their poverty and helplessness is intensified and highlighted with the description of two-storeyed or three-storeyed concrete buildings of the rich men just beside their huts. There are several other things like education and health which have remained beyond reach for the poor. The writer refers to this aspect of their wretched life in his narration of how in Sitapur there is no health centre and only a lower primary school. In the story of 'Pangu' Haricharan cannot get his high education because he cannot afford to live in the residential school of Nandpur far away from his village.

Through the story of Devcharan and Haricharan in the novel the narrator shows the ray of hope even amidst the gloom of despair. He points out that in the prevailing atmosphere of agricultural and economic helplessness there are some persons who gird up their loins with their strong will-power to face handicaps in their way, changing adversity into prosperity. He traces out the factors leading to the backwardness of Mithila region in spite of ample resources for development. He

comments that the darkness which prevails in human society is both natural and artificial. The conservative and superstitious thoughts are the greatest evils. It is we who have to think over the problem and act for the solution. The novelist writes, "Everyone wants that he, his family and society at large should have peaceful life. For this it is we who have to think over what is needed and what the impediment in the way is. The matter to ponder is what sort of life we want."

The writer underlines the dire need of hard work for success in life. He lays emphasis on consistent endeavour when he says, "With our birth we need food to eat, water to drink and air to breathe. Nature provides land for food, water reservoir for water and atmosphere for air. But we have to exert to grow grains from land, make wells and tube-wells for water and keep the atmosphere clean for air." Through the story of Haricharan, the novelist wants to give a message that one can pave one's way through the dark and dismal atmosphere of obstacles by virtue of one's prudence, patience and perseverance to reach the coveted goal of one's life.

A novel consists of five key elements–plot, setting, characterization, theme and style. Let us review the novel 'Pangu' from the viewpoint of these essential elements. Plot is the skeleton of a novel. It is the sequence of events that are woven into the story. The plot may be in chronological order or it may be narrated in flashback technique. In the novel 'Pangu' the plot or story is narrated in flashback. The novel opens with the mention of the birth of Haricharan in a village named Sitapur situated in the heart of Mithila. Then a detailed and graphic description of the village covering twenty-five pages of the novel is presented by the writer. The topographic portrait is followed by the ancestry of Haricharan by flashback.

We are introduced with the protagonist, Devcharan who happens to be the grandfather of Haricharan. Again, by flashback the novelist tells us how Devcharan purchases three acres of ancestral land earlier auctioned by his ancestor to a landlord. Due to a quarrel in the landlord's family over the issue of the elder son, Singheshwar's marriage with a prostitute at the age of sixty, there is an offer to Devcharan to buy back his ancestral auctioned land at a nominal price of one hundred and fifty rupees. Devcharan manages to purchase the land by selling his pair of calves.

Weaving out further sequence of events in the story the writer narrates that Devcharan is worried to think of the future well-being of the family, as his son, Radhacharan is inert and lazy. A conflict of thoughts in his mind keeps him restless. However, the birth of Radhacharan's son, Haricharan brings a ray of hope for him. When Haricharan grows young, Devcharan counsels him to shoulder the responsibility of the family. He gets him married to a caring and industrious girl named Parmesari. He gives him proper guidance to successfully pursue agricultural activities. After Devcharan's death Haricharan with the active support of his wife brings a drastic change in the old agricultural process. He faces the obstacles boldly and wins over the handicaps. With his hard labour and new thoughts, he proves himself a model for farmers.

This plot of crippled agricultural life is interwoven with the sub-plots of Singheshwar's marriage with a prostitute, the quarrel of mango orchard and a few others. The sub-plots are the part and parcel of the main plot and they form the sequence of events contributing to the development of the story. The writer lingers the avid curiosity of the readers by interspersing

his detailed contextual comments with the events of the story. Every event of the story is interrupted by the lengthy referential comments, explanatory notes and the didactic messages of the novelist. The readers have no difficulty in understanding the message of life that the writer wants to impart. The novel begins with the mention of Haricharan born in the village of Sitapur. After 25 page-long topographic description of Sitapur the ancestral family background is presented by flashback. In this way the element of suspense which is the soul of a novel is kept alive in the novel. The novelist creates suspense by withholding information from the reader and releasing it gradually as the story progresses. The novelist nourishes a larger interest of providing detailed and varied portraits of different facets of Mithila life. Of course, the element of plot in the novel is shadowed. But nowhere the interest of the readers in the story of Haricharan flags. Here lies the artistic brilliance of the writer.

In the novel the element of setting has been very much emphasized. The novelist has laid excessive stress on the atmosphere of the novel to provide a befitting background to the story of crippled agricultural life. As the story centres round Sitapur, the representative village of Mithila, the novelist presents a graphic and picturesque descriptive account of the village and its surroundings. The fauna and flora of the village is continuously narrated in twenty-five pages in the beginning of the novel. As a matter of fact, the opening chapter is concerned with the cast of the world of the story before a specific incident. The geographical, social, economic and cultural atmosphere of Mithila is highlighted with utmost emphasis in the novel. The minute details of the various aspects of Mithila life are, of course, helpful in creating a proper background to the theme of crippledness of agricultural life.

The writer enumerates both natural disasters and man-made economic discripancies behind the causes of crippled agricultural life. The people are doomed to live wretched life because of the natural disasters of flood and drought. The floods of the *Kosi, Kamla* and other rivers not only make the villagers homeless but also wash away the standing crops rendering them to the verge of starvation. The drought of 1967 made some poor villagers to unearth bisand, the root of a watery plant and eat it to save their lives.

The novelist draws our attention to a wide gulf between the rich and the poor to underline the wretched plight of the vast majority of the population. In Sitapur only five families are very rich in landed property. About two hundred families are in possession of about five hundred *bighas* of land. But some families have no homestead land or arable land. The people are divided by the names of upper, middle and lower castes. Huts and cottages made of wood and straws can be seen beside two-storeyed or three-storeyed buildings. Poor labourers do not get adequate work to earn their livelihood. So, they take recourse to exodus to cities and other states. All these descriptions provide a background to the plot of Haricharan who decides not to go out in search of job but to work hard in his own field. His life story teaches us to work hard with patience and perseverance to win over the handicaps and reach the height of success.

The novelist, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal has provided adequate importance to characterization in the novel 'Pangu'. The central character, Devcharan is an imaginary character and protagonist who remains the representative of realism. Another main character is Haricharan, his grandson who stands for the ideals of his grandfather. Following his footprints he steers

clear of the handicaps in the way and with his hard work and positive thinking becomes a model peasant thus paving way to the comic end of the novel. The protagonist, Devcharan is economically crippled due to natural disasters of flood and drought and the social and economic discrepancies of landlordism and princedom in pre-independence period. He has to fight against the antagonist in the form of Nature and social system. With his constant perseverance he buys back the auctioned three *bighas* of paternal land. He undergoes a conflict of thoughts how to establish a secure future of the next generation, as his son, Radhacharan is an inert and vagrant person who shirks from work. He is relieved with a ray of hope in the personality of his grandson, Haricharan.

The writer throws much light on the character of Devcharan who is anxious to train his grandson in the art of cultivation. Devcharan counsels him how to take over the rein of responsibility of the family successfully. He preaches him the ethics of hard work for success in life. He tells him, "Baua, akhan tak parivarik bhar apan sir saij jua mein kanha laga khichait elon, o samarth nahin rahal jakar khagta parivar ke aichha." (My child, I have shouldered the responsibility of the whole family but now I do not have the might which the family needs.) Devcharan gets positive response from Haricharan and imparts the lesson of working for the prosperity of the family,

"parivarak je pangupan rahal okar purati karait ohi pangupan ke metbait jahina chirai akash mein swachhand jeevanak saans lait uraiya, tahini parivaro ke banbai chhah." (You have to do away with the helplessness of the family and make the family as happy and free as a bird flying in the sky.)

The patriarch solemnizes the marriage of Haricharan with an agriculturally active girl with whose support

Haricharan brings a drastic change in the farming process. He consolidates all his land pieces at one place by exchanges and pursues scientific farming with improved seeds and modern methods of irrigation. He is hailed as a model farmer. The novelist adopting the direct method of characterization comments,

"ona ketbo pangupan Haricharanak aagu men kiya ne naach karai, muda kishanak samaj main Kisanbrind kahebak adhikari ta achhiye." (Even if too many handicaps may try to hinder Haricharan, he has every right to be called Kisan-brind, the farmer's crown in the society of farmers.)

The writer through a long dialogue between the two main characters highlights their personalities. Their conversations and activities reveal their ideal character. The novelist presents them as flat characters who seem to impersonate the author in their speech. In the novel we find characterization through dialogues and external actions.

The theme of the novel is the crippled farming system of Mithila. India is traditionally described as an agricultural country. But in Mithila, agriculture remains crippled both in pre-independence and post-independence period. As the only source of livelihood, the agricultural economy remains wretched on account of the ravages of the *Kosi* flood causing miseries to the poor masses. The writer says,

"Jahina krishi kshetra pangu banal chhal tahini khete par jeevan javan karain bala kisano bonihar pangu banale chhal."

(Just as agricultural field was paralysed, the peasants and labourers living on agriculture remained crippled.)

Struggling against the prevalent state of being crippled Haricharan paves his way to the path of prosperity by virtue of courage, patience and perseverance. The writer finally

comments, “Ona ketboo pangupan Haricharanak aagu men kiya ne naach karai, muda kishanak samaj main kisanbrind kahebak adhikari ta achhiya.” (Even if too many handicaps may try to hinder Haricharan, he has every right to be called kisan-brind, farmer’s crown in the society of farmers.)

He leaves behind him his footprints which his grandson, Haricharan follows with devotional submission. Discarding the traditional system of cultivation, he introduces the renaissance of green revolution in his farming. He consolidates the land tracts of three *bighas* by exchanges with the peasants of the village for which he willingly suffers the loss of half a *bigha* of land. He installs modern implements of tilling and irrigation and uses improved hybrid seeds. He can grow enough grains, vegetables and fruits to feed his family and earn money by selling surplus food products. For this he exerts day and night with the support of his industrious wife.

The novelist conveys the central idea or theme of the novel both directly and indirectly through the dialogues between Devcharan and Haricharan and also through the actions of the two characters. The thoughts of life are implicit in their conversations. When Devcharan finds himself in the fourth stage of life and wants to counsel his young grandson how to take over the responsibility of the family headship after him, he seems to convey the message of life in the person of the writer himself. So Devcharan impersonates the novelist in the novel. He tells his grandson-

“Baua, akhan tak parivarak bhar apan sir saji gaarik juame kanha laga khinchait elon, muda aab o Samarth nahi rahal jekar khagta Parivar ken achhi.”

(My child, I have shouldered the responsibility of the whole family by this time as an ox drawing the yoke of a cart

but now I don't have the might which the family needs.)

Every old patriarch nourishes a lingering desire in his heart that he should see with his own eyes the secure future of the family in the hands of his descendants. He feels relieved and rests contented to have such a successor who possesses surging will-power and steadfast perseverance to pursue the goal of his life. He wants that the footprints of his life should be followed in regard to bearing the responsibility of the family. In his response to the avid curiosity of his grandfather to know from him his concept of life Haricharan solemnly utters,

"Baba, parivarak je paichhla dhara rahal mane itihas, o tan aab bhut bani chukal achhi, okara tan vartamanak najair san nahiye dekhal ja sakaiye, muda jahina vartaman bhut par thadh achhe aa bhavis dis badhail hiyasi rahal achhi, tahina ne okara majgutik sang pakraiyoke achheye."

(Baba, the past of the family is gone, so we cannot see it from the present viewpoint. But, as the present stands on the past and looks forward to the future, we have to take hold of the present strongly.)

Now Devcharan is convinced of the immense capability of understanding the subtleties of life and taking hold of the rein of the family imbued in the character of his novice grandson. He then reveals his intention what he expects from him,

"Takhan iah je parivarak je pangupan rahal okar purti karait, ohi pangupanken metbait jahina chirai akash men swachhand jibanak sans lait uraiye tahina parivaroken banaib chhah."

(you have to do away with the helplessness of the family and make the family as happy and free as a bird flying in the

sky.)

The thoughts implied in all these dialogues form the theme of the novel. The novelist has made the theme obviously perceptible in the plot and the actions of the characters. The title of the novel itself is thematic. The message of life as devised and intended by the writer is implicit in the title 'Pangu'. We are reminded of the oft- quoted verse of the 'Ramcharit Manas'– 'Mook hoya baachaal, pangu chadhai giribar gahan' (The dumb can become eloquent and the crippled can climb the mountain top.) of course, Tulsidas refers to the above situation by the mercy of God. In the novel, Godly power is interpreted as one's perseverance and will-power. It is rightly said that God helps those who help themselves. As a matter of fact, self-help is the key to success. It embraces the mercy of God with it. The novelist wants to give the thematic message of life that in spite of the myriad crippled conditions hindering the path of success a man blessed with iron will, presence of mind and struggling might can win over all the obstacles to attain the desired goal of life. In consonance with the central theme the novel ends with the optimistic note of victory over crippledness.

It is an author's style that makes a work truly stand out. It distinguises one writer from the other. In the writing of 'Pangu' the author, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal has carved out a distinct identity in the literary element of style. He has left indelible imprint of experimental and novel method of word-play in diction. He has used descriptive style in his rich details to paint a picture of setting and characters. He has beautifully employed literary techniques in the use of similes and metaphors to create a clear picture in the mind of readers. At places he adopts satirical style and makes apt uses of irony to

criticize human behaviour and societal issues.

'Desil vyana sab jan mittha te taisan jampao abahatha'- (Folk dialects are sweet to persons, so I compose in abahatha, the popular rural language)– this is a very popular quote from the great Maithili poet, Vidyapati. It refers to his preference of the rustic language. In 'Pangu' the novelist has chosen to use the language spoken in the far-flung remote areas of Mithila. Maintaining his theory of realism in both theme and style he has used the spoken language in the novel to popularize its attachment to the ground. Of course, Maithili is not a descendant of Hindi. It has its own distinct entity. In this context we remember a great novelist of Hindi hailing from Mithila itself, Sri Phanishwar Nath Renu who used profusely certain dialectical terms in his novels which enhanced the beauty of his literary works. Likewise, Maithili translation of some Hindi words which remained confined only to conversational language in villages has been introduced in the literary language by the novelist. It provides an extra flavour to his literary style. In this context it is interesting to mention some words like paryas (attempt), vekti (individual), bebdhan (hindrance), naon (name), pubhar (east ward) etc. The usage of such words and idioms provides sweetness to the language.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal is gifted with not only rich intellectual thoughts but also with fertile verbal treasure. He is the architect of novel and wonderful dictions. In 'Pangu' he presents a pleasuresome reading with his experimental usage of words like 'kukor', 'sukor' and 'nakor'. Describing Sitapur the novelist says, "Gaon ta gaun chhi, muda ohu maen ne nakor, sukor aa nakorak gun seho achhiye." (A village is a village but even here there are features of well-designed, ill-designed and undesigncd shapes.) Again, we find an interesting word-play

with meaningful suggestions in the terms like abhav, kubhav and subhav (need, hindrance and aid) when in the last chapter of the novel he narrates how Devcharan lived a successful life by treating his indigency not as hindrance but aid and left the footprints of his virtuous life for Haricharan. In the words of the writer, "Abhavon ke kubhav nahi bujhi subhav bana jeevan vasar karabe kela je apan sabh gun-sheel Haricharan ken daan dakshina men dait ai dunia san vida bhela."

As Jagdish babu is a writer of descriptive style, he employs similes, metaphors, allegory etc to create a clear picture in the mind of the reader. His style of writing aims at providing information and instructions for the entertainment and knowledge of the readers. He also wants to satirize the existing evils of the society and with his ironical style gives indirect expression to his purpose of improvement in the existing circumstances which are detrimental to the proper growth of civilized society. In the post-independence India modern agricultural techniques were introduced but the desired results were not achieved. The writer ironically comments," Ek tan ohuna lok bujhaiye je sarkari kaj aa jethua garek kono bharosh nahi. Se bhebe kail. Darjano boring game-gam garail muda sichai keto ne bhel!" (It is commonly believed that the government work and the clouds of Jeth (May) month for shower cannot be trusted. It happened so. Dozens of boring of pipes were installed but they were not used for irrigation anywhere.) He opines that various types of rumours, superstitions and dogmatic beliefs too hindered the proper growth of the country.

The writer has amply used similes and metaphors particularly in the dialogue between Devcharan and Haricharan which enhance the beauty of the language and explain the spirit

of the expression. Literary figures of speech namely similes and metaphors are perceptible in the following addresses of Devcharan to Haricharan-(a) Baua Hari, akhan tan nav udit jakan lohit lal tan nahi muda pirit piraunchh lalik rup me jarur chhah. (You are not as red as scarlet hot iron but you have the redness of the newly-risen sun)

"Baua, maukhik pariksha jakan puchhbeta nahi karai chhia, sankalpit rup men puchhai chhia. Apan samparpan apana le karbah aki anka le?"

(Child, I ask you not as verbal test but as resolute query whether your dedication exists for yourself or others.)

"Baua, akhan tak parivarak bhar apan sir saje gaarik jua men kanha laga khinchait elon.."

(Child, I have been shouldering the responsibility of the family by this time as an ox shouldering the yoke of a cart.)

Haricharan responds positively and tells him with due honour, "muda, aahan kichhu bheliyai taiyo tan dhan gahum daun karaibala khohak jotal barad jakan mehout chhihe. Jena jena khoh par ahan ghumbai tena-tena ne ahink lagal bichalo aa paitak barad jakan hamhu sabh ghumbai." (But you are our guide and mentor. You are like the trained polar ox in the thrashing of paddy and wheat crops while we are like middle and fringe oxen to make rounds at your leadership)

The writer is distinctly known for his elaborate descriptions of many new things and unprecedented facts about Mithila life. Presenting a detailed analytical account of the five joint families of Sitapur he narrates, "Baansak beet jakan o parivaar saghan achhiye. Saghano kena ne rahat, aamak gachh jakan baans thore hoia je sadikal asgare rahai chahat.. Aam-katahar ityadik gachh ekpurkya hoeya, tekar karno achhi je o mati par ekta rahito jena-jena nichcha san upper jaeye, tena-

tena dari phutait saghan hoit megh dambar jakan chatair jaiya, jaise dosrak chatarab badhit bhai jai chhai.. muda bans me se nahi achhi, o tan kera-kharhi jakain jahina nichcha me maati par rahai tahina apana upper chatral paat ken seho upper uthabait jaaiye, jaisan aigla pidhi ken apan bridhi men baadha nahi bhene oho badhite achhi." (Like the groups of bamboo trees, these families are quite dense… The bamboo trees are not like mango and jackfruit trees which remain aloof… The mango and jackfruit trees are domineering trees which go on expanding with branches as they grow up. They assume the form of huge umbrellas and hinder the growth of other trees. But unlike them bamboo trees grow up straight like bananas and reed plants facilitating the growth of other saplings of their new generation.)

Style is a writer's verbal identity which he builds by choosing words and putting them in particular ways. Jagdish babu is a master of simple rustic Maithili prose. He writes with extreme simplicity about the lives and aspirations of average middle and lower middle class Maithils. His simplicity in the novel is touching. His prose is unaffected by the Hindi-mixed Maithili which the urban Maithils use. The writer does not believe in the flashes of ornamental language and figurative expression. But he often compels the readers to stare at the fascinating beauty of the magical combination of words. As a specimen let us see the talk of Sarojilal to Balchan in the mango- orchard wrangle of the story, "Balchan, ladaik morchak ek ek chhan o chhan chhi je chhan men chhanak kay sakai" (Balchan, every moment in the battle front is so vital that it can bring instant upheaval)

The title of the novel is apt and appropriate in view of the theme of the novel. The theme of the novel is the crippled

farming system of Mithila. India is traditionally described as an agricultural country. But in Mithila agriculture remains crippled both in pre-independence and post-independence period. As the only source of livelihood, the agricultural economy was disrupted by the ravages of the *Kosi-Kamla* rivers. The writer highlights the brave struggles of characters like Devcharan and Haricharan to win over the crippledness in the way of agricultural farming. The victory is shown in the comic end of the novel. The terms 'pangu' and 'pangupan' have been used frequently in the novel. Thus, the title is quite significant in view of the theme of the novel.

In the novel the writer presents the impediments in the way of life and through the characters of Devcharan and Haricharan lets us know how to remove them to reach our goal. He presents the basic structure of life. So, the novel is nothing but an anatomy of life. In the novel the writer himself says, "In spite of being a rational creature man is oblivious of the basic structure of life." He explains the basic structure of life thus- "Food is the essential necessity of man. The second basic want is suitable cloth to live in a civilized society. As we do not live wild life now, we need houses to live in. Besides these basic things today we require education, health, art and literature. This, in truth, is the structure of man's life."

The novelist analyses the true philosophy of the existence of life on this earth. He points out, "Everyone wants that he, his family and society at large should have peaceful life. For this it is we who have to think over what is needed and what is the impediment in the way." While providing his saintly suggestion and underlying the value of the dictum "work is worship" he explains "with our birth we need food to eat, water to drink and air to breathe. Nature provides land for food,

water-reservoir for water and atmosphere for air. But we have to exert to grow grains from land, make wells and tube-wells for water and keep the atmosphere clean for air."

'Pangu' has got the honour of being acclaimed with so many prestigious awards for its literary excellence. The novel has been translated into Hindi language so that it may reach the hands of the Hindi- knowing vast world of readers. Being captivated by the artistic brilliance of the original Maithili novel 'Pangu' I myself could not resist the temptation of translating the Maithili script into English language with the title of the book 'The crippled' which was published by Pallavi Prakashan, Nirmali (Bihar.) The rendering of the book in English version with the indelible stamp of the true spirit of translation aims at enabling this literary work to be relished internationally, crossing the barrier of languages. The writer of 'The crippled' solicites comments and suggestions from the judicious readers of the book. ❑

A Topography of Mithila

A novelist creates a background to the plot of his novel. For this he/she weaves out a descriptive texture about the central character and the place he belongs to. Jagdish Prasad Mandal's 'Pangu' is a story of an industrious peasant of Sitapur, a village situated in the heart of Mithila. The novelist presents Sitapur as the representative village of Mithila, a major chunk of Bihar. The pictorial description of the village is so detailed and graphic that it is no exaggeration to say that the novel is a topography of the entire Mithila region.

The novel begins with the introduction of Haricharan born in Sitapur, a central village of Mithila. With it begins the geographical, social, economic and cultural descriptions of the village. The novelist, a 76-year-old inhabitant of central Mithila has got ample practical experiences of all the facets of the village life through the long span of his active agricultural life. He displays his pictorial art of narration in the long, varied and minute details of Mithila region. The description stretches up to page 32 of the novel and then the story of Devcharan is linked with further events of the plot. The writer's keen observation of the various aspects of Mithila life is perceptible in the novel. The novelist, first of all, acquaints us with the geographical boundaries of Mithila. The northern border is beautifully fenced by mountain ranges of the Himalayas and the Kailash mountain with lovely Mansarovar lake in it. In the same way the southern border is built by a group of rivers including the sacred Ganga which has numerous holy banks

like Sultanganj and Simaria ghats (river banks.)

The writer throws light on the climate of Mithila region. He says that it is neither as hot as Rajasthan nor as cold as Siberia. In its temperate climate and fertile soil trees are laden with sweet fruits. The trees enhance the beauty of the surroundings in addition to being economic assets. Sitapur as the representative village of Mithila is described as having one thousand *bighas* of land. There are three types of cultivable land ranging from upper to lower- regionally called bhith, *nichras* and *chauri*. Similarly, the village has more than twenty-five kinds of soil- from the best to the worst- in terms of fertility.

As an agriculturist Jagdish babu draws our attention to different kinds of grains, fruits, flowers, vegetables and edible herbs produced in the fertile soil of Sitapur. Among the grains grown here the most important names are paddy, wheat, maize, lentil, pea, groundnut, gram, *marua*, linseed and mustard. The vigetables like potato, cauliflower, brinjal, lady's finger, pumpkin, ridge-gourd, round-gourd etc are grown in the soil of Sitapur. Edible green leaves like *genhari*, tharia, *patua*, *ghauka* are the products of the village. Flowers of magnolia, pandanus, hibiscus, *shivling*, jasmine, jasminum, aureculatum, Arabian jasmine and rose blossom here. The fruits of mango, blackberry, guava, *lichi*, custard-apple, *aanta*, stone apple, gooseberry, lemon, pomegranate and papaya can be seen on trees. A vivid scenario of different kinds of grains, vegetables, flowers and fruits which adorn Sitapur has been pictured in the novel.

The novelist provides us a panoramic view of Sitapur. He narrates that the village is bereft of a perennial river flowing throughout the year. However, there are two seasonal streams

having water reservoitr only for some months in a year. One is a shallow river which flows only for four months of the rainy season. That is why the people of the village and neighburing villages call it *chaumasiya* (four months) rivulets. The other is comparatively a deep river with water flow for six months from *Ashadh* to *Agahan* (July to December) popularly called chhamasia river for that reason by the people. The rivulets with their tributaries in the vicinity of Sitapur contain water mixed with the dirt of stone and soil but still they present dazzling flow of water. The village harbours eighteen *ganda* ponds (72 ponds) with wooden poles regionally called *Jaith*. In addition to it, there are two huge reservoirs and dozens of small ones regionally called panjhaowala without any wooden poles in the middle. It is believed that the two big ponds were dug out by demons. The smaller ones are nicknamed as *chabhacha*, *kochadhi* and *doh-dawar* on the basis of their size and depth. The village is flanked by two vast tracts of low land regionally called *chauri*, each one of almost a hundred *bighas* which remain flooded with water for six to seven months a year.

Mithila is known among other things for fishes. Sitapur being the emblematic village of Mithila is described as having more than one hundred varieties of fishes available in the lakes, ponds and ditches. The fishes differ in size, colour and taste. The fishes like *rohu*, *bhakur*, and buari have large size, on the other hand *nain* and *saura* are of medium size and *kotri*, *ichna*, *mara*, *dedhwa*, *pothi* etc are small- sized fishes. Besides it, there are also small edible creatures like crab, snail, *ghonghi* etc living in marshy soil.

To provide the setting of the central theme of the crippled condition of agriculturists the novelist draws the outlines of Mithila. He points out that a number of villages are situated

between the *Kosi* and the *Kamla*. These rivers suddenly engulf the villages, eroding the habitation of the residents, making them homeless and causing much devastation. The standing crops are washed away. As a result, the people are left on the verge of starvation. In the same way the unpredictable weather sometimes creates drought which again cripples the economic life of the villagers. However, the people survive by facing the catastrophe with their struggle, wisdom and will-power. In the words of the novelist,

"Muda taiyo hamara sabhken etek atmabaltan achhiye je gyanbalak sang karmbal san seho ham sab apan-apan atmabalak raksha karate chhi." (Yet we do have enough self-confidence to subsist by virtue of our struggle and wisdom)

The writer lists the animals-both domestic and wild-which can be viewed in Mithila. The people of Sitapur look after their domestic animals like cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, horse, elephant, donkey etc. The cattle like cows and buffaloes are tended specially for milk. In the same way the goat is used for getting milk to drink and mutton to eat. Horses and elephants serve people to carry human beings and also things from one place to another. The donkey serves as carrier of things. The ox is used to draw plough and also cart. Dogs and cats are tended for their utilities or for hobbies. Of course, there is not such a big forest in Mithila which can facilitate the safe habitation of elephants, tigers, lions, wolves etc. but there do exist shrubby forest-like regions in the vicinity of Sitapur where deer and cows (nilgais) have their habitats, as these animals are both wild and domestic. A number of nilgais, large Indian antelopes are sometimes visible in human surroundings.

Before embarking upon the task of narrating the life-story of Devcharan which constitutes the plot of the novel the

novelist pens out the detailed sketch of Mithila region where the events of the story occur. The description is strictly confined to Mithila symbolically represented through the village of Sitapur. As a matter of fact, the novel is specially known for immensely detailed, varied and realistic portrayal of Mithila. Such portraits of all the facets of Mithila life in one novel are unprecedented. The novelist himself says,

"Vaicahrik rup main akhno hum Mithilak o rup dekhiye rahal chhi je adauk chintan-dharak anukul achhi. Tai hum sabh ajuk Mithilak chitrankan jan nai karab tan khali jaadu tona wa chhu-mantar kahi dela san bhay jayat, e sambhava nahi achhi. Hazar lakh pahiluka *satyug treta* san nikail aaya ham sabh ekaisam sadi me pahunch chukal chhi."

(Theoretically, even now we can see the picture of Mithila which reflects the old stream of thoughts. So, if we do not depict modern Mithila, it is not possible to be successful by using magic spells or incantation. We have reached the 21st century after passing through thousands of years of old *Satyug* or *Treta* age.)

This regional aspect of the author's writing is comparable to the great works of the famous English novelist, Thomas Hardy and the great Indian novelist and story-writer, R.K. Narayan. In the novels of Thomas Hardy, the events occur in and around Wessex. In the same way Malgudi is the central place around which the short-stories of R.K. Narayan is created. As Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal's plot has the central place in Mithila, he can be called a regional novelist like the famous English novelist, Thomas Hardy and the well-known Indo-Anglian novelist, R.K. Narayan. Sitapur in 'Pangu' is Wessex of Hardy and Malgudi of R. K. Narayan.

Following the principle that literature is the mirror of

society the writer strictly keeps his description to the ground reality of the village life. Of course, as a novelist he takes delight in soaring high with his idealistic thoughts and fluffy emotions but like Wordsworth's skylark which flies high in the sky and keeps its eyes on its nest on the ground he aims at depicting the realistic demeanour of Mithila life with his artistic flourishes. The novelist has trod the thorny paths and also smelt the rosy fragrance of the villages of Mithila. He has seen the antiquity and modernity of this major chunk of our Bihar state. To create a proper atmosphere of the plot of Haricharan in the novel he draws a panoramic sketch of Mithila. The detailed analytical description of the ins and outs of Mithila symbolized through Sitapur provides an interesting reading for the readers of Mithila who find delight in viewing a true portrait of their own life. They relish the delicious taste of this literary composition and feel proud to see their own images there. For the non-Maithils the graphic depiction of the various aspects of Mithila provides a curious reading and many new information about this significant part of Bihar.

The writer's sincere attachment to the native region and his sense of indebtedness to this culturally-tied big village of Mithila inspire him to preserve and save the living memories of the geographical, social, economic and cultural features of his home-village in the indelible and everlasting literary writing of this novelistic creation. In this respect his personal realistic experiences and practical knowledge of the far-flung rustic life of that area are voiced in the minute details of each and every aspect of the village life. While, on one hand, we can view the modernity of life in his description of the rich and resourceful families who live in multi-storeyed buildings, the hapless lot who pass their scorching days and cold nights in their dingy straw-huts draws pity and sympathy from us.

Jagdish babu in his high ambition and large interest of presenting a sound footing and veritable account of the panoramic view of Mithila has emphasized the element of atmosphere which seems to dim the story element of the novel. It is no exaggeration to say that the vital plot element of the novel has been shadowed with the bright light of the topography and other highlights of the novel. The vivid Mithila portrait draws our attention at the first sight. The novelist interrelates the story with the physical terrestrial descriptions of Mithila. He manages to link the story of the novel with the lengthy descriptions of the existing realistic surroundings. In this respect, he succeeds in blending realism with imagination as required by the literary principles of novel-writing. Here lies the artistic brilliance of the novelist. ❑

Social, Economic and Educational portraits

Literature is defined as a mirror of society. Following the ethics of this literary principle the novelist has laid much stress on the realistic depiction of the socio-economic life of the pre-independence and post-independence Mithila. He has presented a graphic description of the social, economic, cultural and educational pictures of this significant region. The novelist has taken pains to throw vivid light on the crippled agricultural system, the ravages of natural disasters, the miseries of the have-nots, landlordism, monkery, participation of Maithils in freedom struggle, change of scenario in independent India etc. The portraits painted in rainbow colours with the deft art of the novelist charm and fascinate the readers.

The novelist presents the social picture of Mithila through the representative model-village of Sitapur. Describing the antiquity of Sitapur he says that it is an old village, not a newly-settled one. Its origin dates back to some eight hundred years ago when two families came here and settled on the bank mounds of the two streams by getting huts of wood and straw built for themselves. The sources of their livelihood were edible leafy greens, meat of small animals, fruits of trees etc. They fulfilled the need of water from the streams flowing in front of their houses. In course of time many families descended from the two original families and many others came from outside to settle there. Later the people turned to agrarian life from forest

life. The influx of the people from outside continued and formed a village named Sitapur.

The novelist points out that today the village in its infrastructure has a curious blend of antiquity and modernity. We can view the dwellings built of wood and straws of olden days where extremely poor men like watchmen of groves and guards of farm crops pass their rainy and cold nights. Along with it, the village presents modern look with two-storeyed or three-storyed brick – built concrete buildings. On one hand, the memories of men's ancient life style remain preserved in the fire wood cooking, bamboo fans, lantern and tube wells, on the other gas ovens, electric fans, electric light and water supply speak of modern amenities.

A very minute structural outline of the village has been sketched. The writer narrates that Sitapur with its area of one thousand *bighas* shelters eight hundred families of about five thousand people. The families are not similar in their population, farm assets and even wisdom. Today the old system of joint families is disappearing. But in Sitapur there are ten or twelve joint families even today. The five of them possess about thirty percent of the total land of the village. They have large and decent buildings with courtyards, sufficient orchards, gardens and enough cultivable land. All the five joint families are not similar in their population and characteristics. The two of them are like a dense forest in respect of population with more than fifty members, whereas the remaining three are of three types. There are two families which are called single – head families in the society. They are composed of five men and five women living together in one place for five generations. This is to say that there was only one son in one generation but there were many daughters who left their

father's home after their marriage and settled with their in-laws. So, the joint families remained small.

The villages of Mithila are inhabited by men of different castes. In some villages the number of particular castes is significantly larger than that of others. The number of castes too varies from village to village. According to the writer Sitapur accommodates about twenty-five or twenty – six castes. We know that the caste is divided into upper, middle and lower levels. In this respect, Sitapur shelters all the three levels of castes. The middle castes are ahead of others in terms of both number and population. The upper castes are three in number while the number of middle castes is as many as twenty. Only four castes of lower class have their inhabitance in the village. Their population too is lower than others.

Throwing light on the occupational activities of the residents of Sitapur the writer says that many of them have the profession of cultivation, while some are service-holders, some priests and most of them cling to their paternal caste professions. For example, barbers do the act of haircutting; washer-men wash clothes; carpenters have the profession of wood work; blacksmiths engage themselves with iron work; potters perform clay work; bamboo baskets are woven by a caste named *Dom* etc. The writer analytically explains how of the four lower castes two named *Dusadh* and *Chamar* are economically better as they possess their own homestead land, some cultivable land and also orchards. But, the other two *Dom* and *Mushar* have no land of their own. The people of *Dom* caste prospered professionally, leaving behind those of Musahar caste, as they adopted hog-rearing as their caste profession. Along with it, they started making bamboo utensils which the people needed most. The Musahars could not do so.

They did not adopt any caste-based craft or occupation nor did they engage themselves in cultivation. However, they took recourse to animal husbandry of a small kind as goat-rearing. They subsisted on wage- earning which continues even today.

In the pre-independence period untouchability prevailed dominantly in the social set-up. The pond owners did not allow all others to take bath in their ponds, not to talk of irrigating their farms. In some villages people of certain castes were forbidden to take bath there. Moreover, there were only five ponds out of eighteen *ganda* ponds (72 pounds) of Sitapur where entry of certain castes was prohibited. After independence social consciousness was aroused to set the ponds free for general public use.

The writer professes that stair-like upward and downward steps have been built among the castes which differentiate one from the other not only in ideological but also in practical fields. It is so in the sphere of religion also. The demarcation of caste and communal feelings has been in existence since long past. The feeling of discrimination resulting in disintegration brings about an atmosphere of rifts and dissensions which are visible from top to bottom. Even gods and goddesses have been divided on caste line. They are differentiated as touchables and untouchables. As a result, people have often been quarrelling and disputing among themselves to demean or humiliate one another. This social disharmony is perceptible in Sitapur too like all other villages. However, in time of natural disaster the bond of social relationship becomes ostensibly visible. Whenever a house catches fire, all people irrespective of their caste differences rush to put out fire collectively. But in social and religious functions their feeling of discrimination remains obvious. We

can see caste groupings in marriage celebrations and community feasts.

Like other villages of Mithila Sitapur is seized with superstition on account of ignorance. Many superstitious and conservative ideas grip the village which come in the way of new ideologies. Many people believe in fortune as a result of which they cannot understand the true meaning of life and death on this earth. When there is little or no rain, they relate it to their fate. The writer recalls how in times of drought people performed religious rites like *yagya* to invoke Indra, the rain-god. Invocation to gods in the name of *Bhagtai* was ceremoniously organized for the purpose. In addition to it, some people played and sang regional folk-dance named Jata and Jatin. In this performance they crushed frogs in a mortar and threw it into the yard of such persons who were regarded quarrelsome in society. It gave rise to quarrels and wrangles next day. The people were and are so much mesmerized in thousands of prevalent gossips regarding the complexities of life. Some anti-social elements were and are active to keep the society enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and superstition for their selfish interests.

The financial wretchedness of this model Mithila village has been highlighted with the description of a big gap between the haves and have-nots. Mostly people here subsist on agriculture. Most of the people are either landless or holders of a few acres of land. Only five families of Sitapur possess about thirty percent of the total one thousand *bighas* of land in the village. Two hundred families are in possession of about five hundred *bighas* of land in all. Some families own five to ten *bighas* of land which are cultivated with the help of labourers. Some others have only a few kathas of land which they

cultivate themselves. Some families do not own cultivable land, so they work as labourers in other's farms. When they do not have any agricultural means of livelihood in the village, they go to earn in the states of Bengal and Assam. In the pre-independence period even the peasants faced a number of problems in cultivation. The princes, landlords and abbots created several hurdles for them. The land revenue was collected through landlords. If the rent of the land was not paid in time for two years, the particular land was auctioned and the peasantry right was abrogated. The non-payment of the rent was due to poverty caused by drought and flood. Some particular castes, landlords and religious estates were immune from land revenue. They availed the situation and enriched their landed property by purchasing the auctioned land of the peasants at a throw- away price.

After survey settlement and Bengal tenancy act peasants got some legal rights of ownership if they had been cultivating the land for twelve years. But the cultivator had to share the harvest with the land-lord, remaining deprived of the ownership of the land. The agitation for ownership of the land was fought which is known as the movement for *bakast* land. In Sitapur the agitation was intense but peaceful. With the *bakast* movement caste feelings grew strong in the nearby village of Rukminipur. The struggle resulted in the cases of caste and class collision. The landlords went to the extent of keeping poor men standing on bricks in the scorching sun-rays and forcing them to bear the onslights of swarms of biting insects on their naked wet body as punishment.

After independence a need of new rules and laws of crop-sharing for *bakast* land tillers was felt. Of course, some families had rent-free homestead land but they too were oppressed with

extortion. In spite of the fact that in the survey farmland record *(khatiyan)* of *Sikmi Batai* was made in the names of rent-free homestead land-holders and tillers, more than half of the beneficiaries were still bereft of the provision. The communist party of Mithila raised its voice for the homestead land to the landless, the right of *sikmi batai* to the tillers, land ceiling for big landlords, distribution of surplus land to the landless tillers etc. In course of his land reformation movement known as *Bhoodan* movement Vinoba Bhave came to Jhanjharpur and addressed a large gathering and appealed to the big landlords to voluntarily donate their surplus land (exceeding twenty *bighas*) to the landless. *Bhoodan* committees were constituted in different villages. In Sitapur the execution of the movement began to prove just opposite to its slogan and principle. Both the government offices and the *Bhoodan* committees became the centre of bribery. As a result, the legal right of a piece of land was given to three or four persons. On the one hand, the landlord did not want to give up their land, on the other wrangles ensued in different villages among so many holders of land receipts for a single piece of land. Only a few landowners were benevolent enough to grant their surplus land as per *Bhoodan* principles for social cause. Some others observed formality by getting rid of marshy and unfertile land while some offered only nominal land. So, the *Bhoodan* movement could not be totally successful.

The deplorable economic plight of the people of Mithila was also because of natural calamities. The ravages of the *Kosi* and *Kamla* rivers were the burning predicament of the people. The Mithila region has ever remained an area of rivers and rivulets. Even today there are dozens of them which cause erosion, floods and desertion. The farmers of Mithila girded up their loins to eradicate the problem. Streams of human beings

in the form of public movement joined hands in the construction of both the embankments of the *Kosi*. The government completed the embankments and got a barrage with shutters built over the river. The river could be tamed and a great relief to the farmers was provided to the people. But the proposed canals for irrigation have not been completed even by this time. As a result, agriculture does not remain the first choice of the agriculturists. On account of it large-scale exodus of labourers to other places out of the state for earning livelihood continues. This is the economic scenario of Mithila which the novelist pictures in the novel.

The writer, Jagdish Prasad Mandal in his long realistic experience of rural life observes all the facets of life very keenly which enables him to portray the landscape view of the region and also present a true realistic picture of the social, economic and educational scenario of the place. His narrative lens capture the scenery of literacy as well because it is the essential need of civilized human life. The novelist acquaints us with both the pre-independence and the post-independence scenes of literacy in the representative village of Mithila, that is Sitapur. He relates that after 1861 some schools were established in its domain by *Raj Darbhanga*. Sitapur was fortunate to have one school from the list of twenty-six schools. Some children mostly from upper class families and a few from middle class families were admitted to the school. But those of the lower-class families could not get admission. However, the school collapsed by the end of the century. It was by virtue of this school that some families saw the light of learning which gradually promoted the growth of literacy in the village.

Tracing the history of educational growth in the village the writer narrates that a private school was later established in

the village through the cooperation of the villagers. A twenty-two feet long mud-walled school-shed was erected where a teacher taught about twenty-five students. The teacher was paid rice measuring a quarter of a kilo and one paisa as remuneration called *Sanichara* on every Saturday by each student. The teacher got food and lodging from the family where he taught the children of the family in return. But in the earthquake of 1934 the school-shed fell down. Later the school was shifted to an out-sider's courtyard. After three or four years a new mud-walled house was made for the school at a desert place with the cooperation of the villagers. The reason for the change of place was that the villagers regarded the old place as inauspicious.

In the Quit India movement, most of the teachers took activate participation for which they were imprisoned by the English rulers. Some of them followed the concept that teachers should keep themselves from politics, so they restrained themselves away from any participation in the freedom struggle. By 1945 the school teachers who had been imprisoned were released from jail. The schools which had been closed on account of it were opened. In Sitapur school too teaching started. All the documents of the previous school had been seized because the then teacher had been charged of treason for which he had been imprisoned for a year. Again, students were admitted when the school opened. It was a lower primary school. There existed a middle school in the nearby village of Rohitpur. There was a high school at Nandpur at a distance of ten miles from Sitapur and Rohitpur but hostel-lodging for students was compulsory there.

The novelist deals with the state of educational facility available during the period to throw light on the poor educational infrastructure in the villages. The description is a

necessary supplement to the plot of the novel. The novelist links the description with the story when he narrates that Haricharan, one of the central characters of the novel could not be admitted in the high school for want of means, as the family could not afford for the hostel-lodging. It reflects how economic problems in the village families came as an obstacle for high or higher education in far-away places. On account of this the desired growth in educational sphere could not be achieved for long. ❑

Crippled Agricultural Conditions

'Pangu' is a novel which focuses on the crippled agricultural conditions in Mithila region represented through the village of Sitapur. The plot of the novel throws vivid light on the wretched plight of those associated with farming. It also reveals that cultivation is the only means of livelihood in the region. When the only means of subsistence is disrupted and denied, there is no other way of survival than exodus to outside places in search of the means of livelihood. The Mithila area of Bihar has seen large-scale exodus of its human resources since pre-independence period. In this prevailing atmosphere of agricultural and economic helplessness there are some persons who gird up their loins with their strong will-power to face the handicaps in their way, changing adversity into prosperity. They can see the ray of hope even amidst the gloom of despair. To give this message of wisdom and perseverance through the life story of Haricharan in the novel the novelist casts an atmosphere of crippledness which hovers over Sitapur, the central village of Mithila.

The novelist himself being a poor peasant of a Mithila village and having a very long experience of cultivation has got realistic observation of the grave challenges coming in the way of the cultivators of Mithila. He has suffered the miseries of life himself and has painfully seen the worst situations in the lives of the helpless lot. The wretched state of the only means of

livelihood has dragged them to the verge of starvation. The novelist with his powerful penning acumen sketches a detailed portrait of the pervading adverse conditions gripping the residents of Mithila living mainly on the agriculture-based occupation. He unveils the most tragic scene of how during the drought of 1967 starving poor labourers saved their lives by unearthing *bisandh*, the root of a watery plant and satisfying their hunger by boiling it.

The novelist analyses the reasons of the crippled state as natural disasters and social and economic discrepancies. He makes it clear that Sitapur and with it the whole of Mithila has got very good soil. In the fertile soil of Sitapur different kinds of grains, vegetables, fruits and flowers can be produced. In the ponds, rivers and streams various kinds of fishes are the assets of the region. But amidst all the essential things Sitapur is not free from the fear of natural disasters. Like Sitapur a great number of villages here are situated between the *Kosi* and the *Kamla*. They are prone to the ravages of these rivers along with some other rivulets and streams. The rivers suddenly engulf the villages, eroding the habitation of the residents, making them homeless and causing much devastation.

The *Kosi* river is known as the sorrow of Bihar. It flows mostly in the area of Mithila. After independence of the country the government planned to contain the river within embankments and use surplus water for irrigation. It was also projected to construct a barrage, a bridge with shutters over the river. The people of Mithila were excitedly very joyful. Streams of human resources in the form of public movement joined hands in the construction of both the embankments. With the completion of the barrage and the embankments it was hoped that the agricultural land would be properly irrigated.

The construction of canals was initiated but could not be completed even by this day. Some constructed canals remained without water for years and were damaged. The true benefits of the project could not be made available to the cultivators of the vast Mithila area. Even after sixty years the canal projects go at snail's pace. In the meantime, due to heavy rain the *Kosi, Kamla* and other rivers were heavily flooded. Even the dams were broken at several places and the standing crops were washed away. The houses collapsed and the wells and ponds were rendered useless. The ravages of flood continued every year due to the breach of embankments and dams here and there. All this cast a discouraging effect on the agricultural prospect.

In the pre-independence period farmers had no advanced means of irrigation. Most of them depended on rain for the watering of their plants. Some of them managed to irrigate their farmland to some extent with the pond-water with a *karin*, a handmade wooden device. But, that too was scarce and many of the pond owners did not allow the villagers of lower castes even to take bath, what to talk of irrigating the farm land. Even edible grains were used as seeds which resulted in low yield. So, our country being a country of farmers could not produce grains required for the entire population when the country had low population in comparison to the present. People had to live on imported wheat and barley to escape starvation.

Now after independence with new techniques and instruments of cultivation along with high breed seeds and modern means of irrigation a green revolution has been introduced in the agricultural field. The government has offered to provide loans to the needy farmers for all modern farming facilities. Of course, we are now self-dependent in food grains

but still the desired goal is not achieved. Inertness and laziness still prevail in the field. There is a need of awareness among the farmers. The novelist through the life story of Haricharan wants to suggest that one should avail the opportunities to enrich oneself with the agricultural occupation as Haricharan does with his will-power and hard labour.

Another natural disaster for agricultural sector is drought here. Both flood and drought have played havocs. Here the people have the bitter experiences of the last century when there were as many as twenty-five drought years. The Mithila people had the experience of a continuous twelve-year drought. The story is known to all how after drought of twelve years king Janak ploughed the land and Sita was born. In 1967 there was a severe drought. It drew the attention of all from the common people to the government towards the need of water for irrigation. By this time the farming class had culturally no inclination to make artificial arrangement of irrigation. But the drought induced in the them much-needed attraction for it.

The government started a project of digging state boring with the foreign aid. But it was electric-powered. There was no or little electric supply in villages. So, the boring could not be operated well. For irrigation watercourse or drain is needed to be constructed. It could not be constructed at most places. The few drains which were constructed were so inferior in quality that they were broken before use. In villages there is a folk proverb, “one should not rely on government work and May shower.” It proved true. Then the government revived the defunct agricultural department and set up separate department in every block. Loans for new agricultural instruments, hybrid seeds and ploughing machines began to be granted on subsidies to promote high yield. Chemical fertilizers, pesticides and

pump-sets were made available to farmers on loans with subsidies to be paid in easy instalments to the lending banks. 'Jai Jawan, Jai kisan' became the national slogan. There was a rapid growth in agricultural yield. In spite of all this, the crippledness of agricultural production could not be eradicated. Forty five percent of agricultural produce of Mithila and Bihar was and is used as raw materials of factories elsewhere but no factory could be set up here. So, the desired growth has not been achieved. In the field of agriculture vast resources are available which continue to remain crippled. Neither land nor water can be properly utilized and as such large-scale exodus of labourers continues even today. The writer deplores that now when all the facilities of basic needs are available in cities and towns, thousands of villages like Sitapur have nothing to utilize the physical and mental manpower of the workers rendering them unemployed and hungry and promoting exodus.

Behind the crippled agricultural life, it is not only natural disasters but also social and economic inequalities which have made the poor poorer and the rich richer. The wide gulf between the haves and have-nots have worsened the situation. In the pre-independence period, the English colonial rulers patronized with the princes, landlords and abbots *(mahanthas)*. Most of the village people were either landless or holders of a few acres of land. The land revenue was collected through landlords. If the rent of the land was not paid in time for two years, the particular land was auctioned and the peasantry right was abrogated. It meant that the landholder or '*raiyat*' lost the ownership of the land. The non-payment of the rent was due to poverty caused by drought and flood. The writer recounts that the lower- and middle-class farmers were the worst sufferers. The land- owners of certain caste were exempted from paying land revenue. In the Bengal tenancy act of 1885 and the survey

settlement of land between 1896 and 1903 it was legally provisioned that the peasants who had been cultivating the piece of land for twelve years had got the ownership right. But the demerit of the provision was that the cultivator shared the harvest with the landlord remaining deprived of the ownership right.

After 1935 a public movement for *bakast* land (land owned on rent) against that landlord became intense in Mithila and the whole country. In some places the landlords succeeded in creating rifts among the people by their foul-play and violent methods. In some villages the agitation was peaceful and successful. In Sitapur the agitation ended with success. It was due to the fact that unlike other villages there were not too many political parties with different viewpoints. The congress and leftists with two streams of thoughts came to an accord on the matter under the influence of Swami Sahjanandji. But in the nearby village of Rukminipur the movement caused serious discord. Caste rivalry for power gave birth to several cases of caste collision. The landlords gave severe punishments to labourers and workers for minor faults. On account of it the events of forcibly occupying land took place and violent fights between two groups resulted in deaths of some persons on both sides. A number of people involved in the violence were put behind bars.

The movement for *bakast* land in Mithila region was pursued heart and soul. The *bakast* land was the land which was finalized by the English rulers in the survey settlement of 1903. The people had been cultivating the land for several generations. But they had no ownership right. So, they regarded themselves as crop-sharers. They cultivated the land, shared half of the harvest with the landlord, paid the high interest of

the loan and finally remained empty-handed. Of course, some families had rent-free homestead land but they too were oppressed with extortion. In spite of the fact that the survey farmland record *(khatiyan)* of '*Sikmi Batai*' was made in the names of rent-free homestead land-holders and tillers, more than half of the beneficiaries were still bereft of the provision. The Communist party of Mithila struggled for homestead land to the landless, the right of *Sikmi batai* to the tillers, land ceiling for big landlords and abbots and distribution of their surplus land to the landless tillers etc.

The writer refers to the history of the early period of independent India. He points out that the native government abolished the zamindari system. With it hopes of economic amelioration arose among the landless people. In Mithila region too Vinoba Bhave came to Jhanjharpur with his proposal of *Bhoodan* movement in 1955. He addressed an enormous gathering and demanded the voluntary gift of one sixth of their landed property from big farmers to be distributed among the landless. Although the *Bhoodan* committees were formed on village, district and state levels, the movement could not achieve perfect success due to bribery in the committees and government offices. As a result, the legal right of a piece of land was given to more than one person on account of which land disputes were fought socially and legally. Some donors observed formality in offering nominal land instead of one sixth of their landed property. In addition to it the donated land was marshy and sandy land which was unfertile. So, land dispute continues to this day.

The agriculturist writer traces out the factors leading to the backwardness of Mithila region in spite of ample resources for development. He says that after independence of the

country many sugar and rice mills were set up at different places of Mithila. The sugar mills were in operation only for six months in a year. The mill workers were paid half salary for no work during the closure of the mills but that too was not regular. Sugar cane farming was done for cash crops but it could be done only in highland, not in low land where water logged. But all villages had not such land. The sugar mills were established in the vicinity of sugar-cane growing villages but even in remote villages cultivation of sugar-cane was done sparsely regarding at as a cash-crop. The peasants carried the sugarcane from their farms to the mills by bullock-cart or goods-train. The carriage cost was deducted from the price of the sugarcane. So, remote peasants got less payment than the nearby peasants.

The novelist narrates how there were several obstacles in the way of sugar-cane farming. As it was a seasonal crop, it became ready for harvest at the same time. It was supplied according to the demand receipts of the mill. So, if it could not be harvested in time, it lost some of its weight causing loss to the peasants. In addition to it the cane growers waited for months and years for the payment. To add insult to injury, if the permission receipts could not be got for supply due to the limit of the daily crushing capacity, the standing crops remained unharvested causing heavy loss to the farmers. All this discouraged the farming of sugarcane which led to the shutdown of the mills.

Describing the long-awaited advent of freedom to the country the novelist points out that the Zaminadari system ended and with it the rule of the Zamindars in regard to the revenue collection ended. The village people learnt that now the land revenue would be collected by the government and the

money would be spent for social work. But miscreants on behalf of the land-lords created hurdles. So, land disputes and share-cropping wrangles still occurred here and there. The writer recounts how in Sitapur too an incident of quarrel took place over the question of plucking mangoes in the mango orchard. The three brothers Gulabchan, Balchan and Gyanchand looked after the mango orchard of a land-lord. Their ancestors had been sharing the fruits equally with the land-lord. But now after the freedom of the country and the abolition of Zamindari system Gulabchan thought in his mind that the orchard was owned by him. When the officials of the landlord got the fruits of mango plucked, the three brothers at the instigation of a village henchman, Sarojilal decided to protest the action of the *barahil*, *patwari* and *asesar* who had brought a few persons in their support. A number of young men and women of the village unitedly came in support of Gulabchan. All the officials who had got mango fruits plucked ran away to save their lives. The pile of mango fruits was seized by Gulabchan. Some of the villagers who had come in support of the officials of the landlord were caught and beaten. They were punished to lick their own saliva as remorse.

The sagacious writer reviews the causes of crippled agricultural life of the people. He comments that the darkness which prevails in human society till now is both natural and artificial. The conservative and superstitious thoughts are the greatest evils. He suggests, "Everyone wants that he, his family and society at large should have peaceful life. For this it is we who have to think over what is needed and what is the impediment in the way. The matter to ponder is what sort of life we want. With our birth we need food to eat, water to drink and air to breathe. Nature provides land for food, water reservoir for water and atmosphere for air. But we have to exert

to grow grains from land, make wells and tube-wells for water and keep the atmosphere clean for air.” In the novel the instance of Haricharan facing the obstacles bravely and winning over the handicaps of agriculture with his hard labour and new thoughts provides an underlying message that one can pave one’s way to the path of success through adverse circumstances by virtue of prudence, patience and perseverance. The great Maithili novelist brings an end to the narrative of the novel with his comment,

“ona ketbo pangupan Haricharanak aagu men kiya ne naach karai, muda kisanak samaj main kisanbrind kahebak adhikari ta achhiye.” (Even if too many handicaps may try to hinder Haricharan, he has every right to be called kisanbrind, the farmers crown in the society of farmers.)

The novelist has laid much emphasis on the crippledness of agricultural life of Sitapur and that is why the novel is titled ‘The crippled’ ❑

Analysis of the key elements of the novel

A novel is a literary genre that tells a story about people and their experiences. It is an extended work of narrative fiction usually written in prose and published as a book. A good novel gives us a better understanding of ourselves by drawing us into the lives of characters that come out of the writer's imagination. It is meant to entertain us and also provide us glimpses of life. It gives us an opportunity to see the world from different perspectives. On the one hand it liberates us by allowing free flight to our imagination, on the other it reminds us of the hard realities of life.

A novel can accommodate a large number of elements. A novelist may emphasize particular elements in his or her fictional work. A novel consists of five key elements–setting or atmosphere, plot or story, character, theme and style. All these elements work together to create a coherent story. One can view the elements in any order at one's convenience. Setting is the 'where' and 'when' of the story. Plot is the 'what' (what is the story of the novel.) Character is the 'who' (who is the main person.) Theme is 'why' (the author's message and one of the reasons why the author wrote the story or novel.) Style is 'how' (how does the author narrate the story.)

The element of setting is concerned with the place and time of the story. So, the setting can be divided into two types-physical and chronological. The first aspect refers to the place where the story of the novel takes place. It creates an

atmosphere for fiction. It helps the readers imagine the scenes. It also gives information about a character. It involves not only geography but also the entire climate of beliefs, habits and values of a particular region. Sometimes it emphasizes a certain locality. It is essential that the setting should be in keeping with the story that is told. The physical setting can be an imaginary place or a real one. It influences the characters to act and think. It creates the environment in which a story is unfolded. In the same way the chronological aspect of setting can be general or specific. It may cover the past, present and future.

Plot is the skeleton of the novel. It is the description of what happens in the novel. It is the sequence of events that are interwoven in the story. The plot of a novel includes the overall structure of a work of art and the order or sequence of incidents. Plot usually progresses through the stages–exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement or resolution. In the exposition the author introduces characters and provides information about earlier events and present situation. The rising action is the part of the complication. The climax or the crisis is the most intense moment either mentally or in action. The falling action or anti-climax is the action which follows the climax. There is no decrease in intensity by this time. It is in the denouement or resolution that the tension is relaxed. It is here that the protagonist steers clear of the impediments. The plot may be in chorological order or it may be narrated in flashback technique.

Characters are the people, animals or robots that take part in the story. There are main characters and minor characters. The main characters are those whom the story revolves round. The minor characters are those who interact with the main character and move the story along. The main or central

character in a narrative is called the protagonist. The antagonist is the person, thing or force that works against the protagonist. It can be another character. In a novel characters are generally imaginary but virtually they are representatives of realism. We can evaluate a character in three ways-what the individual says, what he or she does and what others say about him or her. It is the art of the novelist which presents the appearance, speech, action and interaction of the character. This is called characterization. Every character undergoes conflict which is the struggle to achieve the goal or solve the problem. It is rightly said that there is no story without conflict. The conflict may be external or internal. The external conflict may be man versus man or man versus Nature. It may be between man and environment. The internal conflict is the conflict of thoughts within the individual himself or herself. It may be between man and fate-a problem that is beyond human power. The character undergoes the conflict of thought in the story and finally wins it over at the end of the story or yields to it.

The theme of a novel is the main idea or message that the author wants to convey to the readers. In creative writing it is the core underlying idea or message from the writer. In other words, the theme is the writer's critical belief about life communicated through the novel. It is usually the author's opinion. It is nicknamed by the names of main idea, central idea, central point and main point. This main idea can be explicit which means it is directly stated in the story or it can be implied which means it is not directly stated in the story. In some stories or novel it is easy to pick up the theme but in some others, we may have to delve deep in the story for it. Generally, in a novel or story the theme is implied. It is portrayed through a character's actions settings and plot. We must mark out a difference between the theme and subject or topic in a story.

The subject is the topic that the writer has chosen to talk about in his\her literary work. The theme states a fact or opinion on that subject. It is presented in thoughts and conversations of characters.

The style of a novel refers to the author's use of language, tone, point of view and other literary devices to convey the story and themes. It is the manner of expressing thoughts in language. It is the way in which an author writes or tells a story. It is what sets one author apart from another. There are many important points that together make up a writer's style such as tone, word choice, grammar, language, descriptive technique and so on. The tone is the emotional attitude conveyed through the writing. The choice of words can be formal, informal, simple, complex and evocative. There may be use of metaphors, similes, personification and other literary devices to create imagery and other deeper meaning. The sentence structure and syntax form the part of style. There are different types of writing style such as persuasive writing, narrative writing, expository writing, descriptive writing and analytical writing. It is the style which distinguishes one author from the other. A work of art truly stands out by virtue of the author's style. The writer's unique style is often considered a reflection of his or her individual voice and perspective. Through his narrative technique the author creates suspense to retain the interest of readers till the end. He uses interesting dialogues or conversations among the characters to impress the readers.

(A) Setting of 'Pangu'

In the novel 'Pangu' the element of setting has been given much importance by the novelist, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal. A long and detailed background has been created before the beginning of the story. Taking into consideration the nature of

the plot as reflected through the title of the novel the novelist leaves no stone unturned to provide a befitting atmosphere to the story. In the very first line of the novel, we find the name of the main character, Haricharan and the name of the village, Sitapur where he was born. Then starts the graphic and picturesque descriptive account of this representative village of Mithila. The fauna and flora of Sitapur is continuously narrated in twenty-five pages. Only then the story of Haricharan is linked with his ancestry by flashback.

The writer, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal, a 76-year-old inhabitant of central Mithila learns the ins and outs of the entire region through the long span of his active agricultural life, his sensitivity to social activities, love of communist ideas and wide travels. He gives expression to his realistic experiences in his vivid pictorial description of the geographical, social, economic and cultural atmosphere of Mithila represented through the village of Sitapur. The detailed description of the various aspects of Mithila life is so expository that the readers have no difficulty in understanding the development of the story. It serves as the explanatory notes behind the crippled agricultural life of the protagonist in the story of the novel. The atmosphere of crippled agricultural life pervades in the novel throughout. The novelist is able to create the proper atmosphere of the story in details. It is no exaggeration to state that the plot of the novel remains a bit shadowed under the larger interest of the novelist to highlight the minute details of social, economic, educational and cultural aspects of Mithila life.

The novelist portrays a vivid portrait of Sitapur. We find here clear pictures of its climate, soil, rivers, domestic animals, infrastructure etc. The novelist acquaints us with the grains, fruits, flowers and vegetables produced here. One can view

different kinds of fishes available in the lakes, ponds and ditches of Sitapur. It is interesting to see that Sitapur with an area of one thousand *bighas* of land is inhabited by the people of different castes.

Describing the climate and trees of Sitapur the observant writer writes-

"Sitapur gaam ne Rajasthan san achhi jaitham jharinuma gachh-birichh chhori khali chhipgar-sargar gachh-birichh hait aa ne siberia san thandha mulk jakaan achhi jaitham kai-lichen sadrish bauna gaachh-birichh chhori dosar kono chhipgar-sargar gaachhe nai hait."

(Sitapur can neither be similarised with Rajasthan where, instead of tall and trim trees, only short and shrubby plants like acacia are visible, nor can it be compared with a cold country like Siberia where, except bushy and dwarfish plants like kai-chen, no high and shapely tree is available.)

The village has all types of land from high to low. So, the produce from the land is of all types. Several types of grains, pulses and oil seeds like paddy wheat, *marua*, maize, lentil, pea, groundnut wheat, gram, mustard etc. are grown. Similarly, vegetables like potato, cauliflower, brinjal, tomato, lady's finger, pumpkin, gourd etc. are produced. We can see the tall and shapely fruit trees of mango, blackberry, guava, litchi, custard apple, gooseberry etc. At the same time fruits like lemon, pomegranate and papaya can be seen on bushy and dwarfish plants. Likewise, edible green leaves like *genhari*, tharia, *patua*, *ghauka* etc. are products of the village. Flowers like magnolia (champa), pandanus (karbir), hibiscus (arhul), and *shivling* jasmine (chameli), jasmine (beli) and rose enhance the beauty of the village and also make the atmosphere of the village fragrant.

The writer lets us know that Sitapur is very rich in water-reservoirs. Besides lakes, ponds, ditches and streams the village is flanked by water-logged low-land called *'chauri'*, where more than one hundred varieties of fishes differing in size, colour and taste are available. The fishes like *rohu*, *bhakur* and *gaichi* are highly flavoursome, whereas *bhuna* and buari have their special taste. Small-sized fishes like *kotri*, *ichna*, *mara*, *dedhwa*, *pothi* etc are the choice of a large number of fish-lovers. There are also such edible creatures like crab, snail, *ghonghi* etc living in marshy soil which the poor prefer to eat.

Talking of the infrastructure of the village the novelist presents an analytical description that sitapur with its area of one thousand acres of land shelters eight hundred families of about five thousand people. Only five families are very rich in landed property. About two hundred families are in possession of about five hundred *bighas* of land. Some families own five to ten *bighas* of land. About six hundred families share two hundred *bighas* of land while some families possess only homestead land but no arable land. In the village some families are indigent enough not to have their homestead land.

Sitapur is a village of about twenty-five or twenty-six castes. The castes are divided into upper, middle and lower cadres. Most of the residents have got the occupation of cultivation. Some are service holders, some priests and most of them cling to their paternal caste professions. For example, barbers do the act of hair-cutting; washermen wash clothes; carpenters have the profession of woodwork; blacksmiths engage themselves with iron work etc. There are three upper castes, twenty middle class castes and four lower castes. The middle castes are ahead of others in terms of both the number of castes and population.

Sitapur has the blend of antiquity and modernity in the housing infrastructure and human life-style. Just as in olden days dwellings were made of wood and straws, such huts made of wood and cottages can be seen in Sitapur as the dwellings of the extremely poor. It does not mean that the village lacks two-storeyed or three-storeyed concrete buildings. There are such brick-built houses with the amenties of water-supply, electric fans, gas ovens and such others. If there is the light of electricity, there is also the use of lantern, lamp and even earthen lamp for light. The old and new things divide the village into two parts. There are several other things like education and health which obviously differentiate between the haves and have-nots.

In spite of the adequate natural resources available in the village for subsistence the people of the village are doomed to live wretched life because of the natural disasters of flood and drought. The *Kosi*, the *Kamla* and many other rivers rise in spate and engulf the villages eroding the habitation of the residents and making them homeless. The floods wash away the standing crops, rendering the people to the verge of starvation. The breaches of dams and embankments due to heavy rain and flood cause immense losses to lives and properties. If, on one hand, floods pose a threat to lives of the people, on the other, the unpredictable weather sometimes creates drought when trees, plants, cattle and fishes are dragged to the verge of death for scarcity of water. The writer reminds us that the people have bitter experiences of the last century when there were as many as twenty-five drought years. The mythological story is known to all how after drought of twelve years when king Janak ploughed the land, Sita was born. The novelist unveils a tragic incident how in the drought of 1967 some poor workers of Sitapur saved their lives by eating

'*bisandh*', the root of a watery plant which they unearthed and boiled before eating.

Not only natural disasters but also man-made economic discrepancies have reduced the vast majority of the people in villages to the direst poverty. Thousands of landless families do not get adequate farm work to earn their livelihood. A great number of villages like Sitapur have nothing to utilize the physical and mental man-power of the workers rendering them unemployed and hungry and promoting exodus. The writer elaborates all these deplorable conditions of the hapless lot only to provide a befitting setting and atmosphere to the story of Haricharan's struggles against the prevailing crippledness in agricultural activities and his success by virtue of his perseverance and practical wisdom.

In the story of the novel the chronological setting is provided through the crippled plight of the pre-independence and post-independence period of India. During the colonial rule landlordism, princedom and abbotism made the poor poorer and the rich richer. The economic disparity and exploitation of the poor gave rise to struggles for *bakast* and sikmi-batai land. In the freedom struggles the real crusaders were the common people. But, even after so many years of the freedom of the country the conditions of the poor have not been improved much. All these have been described in details as befitting background to the story of the novel.

In the story Devcharan has seen the ups and downs of the family. He has faced the impediments coming in the way with his sagacity and hard labour to shoulder the responsibility of the family. Now when he reaches the fourth stage of his life and finds his son, Radhacharan dull and inactive, he becomes anxious about the future of the family. He sees a hope in the

person of his grandson, Haricharan whom he counsels to bear the rein of responsibility. Haricharan pledges to follow his footprints. He assures his grandfather,

"Baba, parivarak je paichhla dhara rahal mane itihas, o tan aab bhut bani chukal achhi, okara tan vartaman-ak najair san nahiye dekhal ja sakai, muda jahina vartman bhut par thadh achhi, aa bhavis dis badhaile hiyasi rahal achhi, tahina ne okara majgutik sang pakraiyok achhiye"

(Grandpa, the past of the family is gone, so we cannot see it from the present viewpoint. But as the present stands on the past and looks forward to the future, we have to take hold of the present strongly,)

The writer wants that the peasants of Sitapur and other villages of Mithila should not yield to adverse circumstances facing agriculture but they should face the crippled situations with might and main. He laments the exodus of village hands and brains to cities for livelihood. In the story Haricharan decides not to go out for earning but to cultivate his land scientifically and methodically with modern appliances and devices. He tells his grandfather,

"Baba, apan kaj huai aaki ankar kaj ketau ta mehnatak phal bhetat, tahu me jakhan apana khet-pathar achhi takhan jau nokri karai jaib tan apan kheti-pathari kena hait?"

(Grandpa doing our work or other's work will be rewarded with sweet fruits. As we have our own landed property, how will the cultivation and the follow-up work be done if I go for a job?)

The learned novelist gives much importance to setting and provides lengthy details and explanatory references for every event of the story. He narrates the pre-independence social, economic, political and cultural lives of the village

people. He portrays the post-independence development to highlight the crippled conditions still existing in the life of villagers. It appears that the story and the referential details go side by side in the novel. Every event of the story is interrupted by the contextual explanatory notes and detailed environmental backgrounds. With the present physical description of Sitapur the novelist traces out the historical origin of the domain of *Raj Darbhanga* and the system of land revenue. He reveals how the landlords, and princes did not take an active part in the freedom struggle of the country. The terrible earthquake of 1934 too comes into description to show its devastations in Sitapur as well. The Quit India movement led by Mahatma Gandhi was perceptible in its letter and spirit in the village of Sitapur also. Sitapur too saw the dawn of freedom with hopes of betterment in the lives of the people. The abolition of zamindari system and *Bhoodan* movement were introduced to bridge out the gulf between the rich and the poor. It also caused land disputes at places.

The novelist describes how dams and embankments were made to control floods but the proposed canals for irrigation could not be completed. State borings for irrigation were sunk at places but for want of electricity supply they remained inactive. Improved seeds and modern agricultural appliances were made available on loans from banks but in spite of all these things agriculture could not be improved as expected. It remained crippled. This atmosphere of crippledness serves as a befitting setting to the story of the anxiety of Devcharan for the uncertain future of the family and later his grandson, Haricharan's success in agricultural activities with his wisdom and hard labour.

The setting of a story is always important. It influences

the way characters act and think and all aspects of their lives. In accordance with the principle of setting the novelist has built a befitting atmosphere with detailed social, economic and educational conditions of Mithila where the events of the story take place. This proper setting helps the readers to understand clearly the other elements of the novel such as plot, characterization, theme and style.

(B) Plot

E.M. Forster in his book 'Aspects of the Novel' discusses different components of the novel. He defines plot as the cause-and-effect relationship between events in a story. While distinguishing between story and plot he says that a story is simply a sequence of events but in a plot events are inter-connected and lead to specific outcomes. It means that events are not merely strung together but are logically connected. They contribute to the overall narrative.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal is well-versed in the art of the structure of the plot in his novels. In 'Pangu' the events are presented in logical sequence. The causes of crippledness in agricultural field are presented in details. The protagonist, Devcharan is placed in such a social and economic environment where he struggles hard to maintain his family. His ancestors owned three *bighas* of land which was auctioned for non-payment of land revenue because of their abject poverty caused by natural disasters like flood and drought. Devcharan tends cows and by selling his pair of calves buys back the auctioned land. He faces the onslaughts of Nature and also the oppression and exploitation of landlords. With his hard labour and wisdom, he succeeds in earning livelihood to support his family. But he is seized with anxiety to think of the

future, as his son, Radhacharan is a lazy sort of man. However, his grandson, Haricharan cures him of his worry when he promises to follow his footprints. After his death Haricharan emerges as a model farmer with his new thoughts of green revolution.

The novelist has inter-connected the sequence of events with logical relationship. Usually plot progresses through stages like exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. The story of Devcharan and Haricharan as the two protagonists is developed artistically through these components of the plot. First of all, we are introduced with Haricharan who is born in Sitapur, a central village of Mithila. Then, by flashback, his ancestral background is presented. The details of the wretched and helpless economic predicament of the ancestors provide the requirements of rising action. In course of the development of the story we are acquainted with the brave struggles made by the protagonist, Devcharan in face of adverse natural and man-made obstacles. The climax of the plot comes with the conflict of mind faced by the protagonist who sees dark future in the hand of his inert and lazy successor, his son, Radhacharan, but the birth of Haricharan brings a ray of hope in his mind. He imparts him proper counselling of life through his long and valuable dialogues with him about shouldering the responsibility of the family. It constitutes the falling action of the plot. The resolution of the plot comes as a comic end when Haricharan with the active support of his wife, Sanichari is described as 'kisan-brind' with his dedicated working ardour and high vision of green revolution.

Suspense is the soul of a novel. It is a literary device that creates tension and anticipation in the reader. In the plot of 'Pangu' we do not find the element of suspense imbued in the

sequence of events. It is because the novelist himself provides a detailed background to every chain of events to make the readers understand the follow-up events. Every event of the story is interrupted by the lengthy referential comments and explanatory notes of the novelist. However, the spirit of suspense runs throughout the text of the plot. It is obviously perceptible in the flashback account of ancestral perspectives.

No conflict, no story-is a common saying. Conflict is the struggle to achieve the goal or solve the problem. It may be external or internal. It may be man versus man, man versus Nature and man versus fate. All protagonists have something to overcome, whether it is a battle against another character or an attempt to escape the unfairness of their situation in life. Conflict is introduced to keep the plot moving. It makes the reader interested and engaged. Through it he is kept in suspense and anxiety until the resolution is achieved. The events of the solution of the conflict reveal the greatness of the protagonist's character. In 'Pangu' Devcharan lives a life of conflict throughout. He struggles hard to fight against natural as well as social hurdles in the way of providing sustenance to his family members. Again, his anxiety to find suitable successor prompts him to train his grandson in the art of proper farming. His conflict is resolved with the positive response from Haricharan. Now he dies a peaceful death.

The novelist takes special care of the construction of the plot by portraying the protagonists with reference to their social and familial background. He emphasizes the life force within the individuals. The story of Devcharan and Haricharan is narrated in a unique piece of art. The minute descriptions of the social and economic environment in the novel highlight the adverse situations in which the protagonists are placed. In the

novel the writer takes little freedom to make a flight of imagination. He sticks to reality in his plot construction. We can say that this novel is not simply a mirror of life but a real life itself. Every sensible father wants that his son should prove himself as an able descendant. In his old age he feels relieved to see his progeny fit and eager to shoulder the yoke of the family-cart. Devcharan dies a peaceful death with the feeling of satiety. The novelist beautifully describes the event thus, "...apan sabh gun-sheel Haricharanken dan-daichhana me dait ai duniya san vida bhela." (He breathed his last, leaving the footprints of his life for Haricharan.) This familial and social relationship strikes the keynote of the cultural life of Mithila and the country as a whole.

In the novel the main plot consists of sub-plots which work like tributaries to the main stream. In 'Pangu' there are two sub-plots - singheshwar's marriage with a prostitute and the quarrel of mango orchard. The first is inter-woven with the main plot of Devcharan and Haricharan. The novelist has deftly made this sub-plot as part and parcel of the plot. He describes how Devcharan gets an opportunity to buy back three *bighas* of ancestral land auctioned by his fore-father on account of his poverty. The descendants of the purchaser decide to give back the auctioned land lo the previous owner for a fixed price. The cause of the decision is a dispute among the three brothers over the elder brother, Singheshawar's marriage with a prostitute of other caste at the age of sixty. Devcharan affords to purchase back the ancestral landed property by selling his pair of calves. The other sub-plot is not inter-woven in the plot directly but it reflects the atmosphere of poor peasant's struggle against the landlord's oppression in which Devcharan, the protagonist has to wriggle to earn his bread.

The title of a work of art is the soul of its plot. It represents the central idea of the novel. The crippled farming system of Mithila is the pivotal subject-matter of the novel. The novelist has presented the details of the wretched agricultural economy of Mithila to highlight the main plot of the novel. The terms 'pangu' and 'pangupan' have been used again and again in the novel by the novelist in the dialogues of the main characters and also in the referential and explanatory descriptions. As the title stands for the plot of the novel, it is apt and appropriate.

(C) Characterization

Characterisation is the author's way of showing or telling the reader who the characters are and what they are like. It is the representation of the traits, motives and psychology of a character. There are two ways of sketching the character. One is the direct method in which the author directly states a character's traits or qualities. In the other method of indirect characterisation the author reveals a character's traits through his actions, dialogues, thoughts and interactions with other characters. What a character does especially in challenging situations can reveal his character. How a character interacts with others can reveal his personality. We can say that characterisation means how the personality of the character is developed in the story.

In 'Pangu' there are two main characters. The events of the plot are deftly arranged in logical sequence to throw much light on the exemplary character of the protagonists. The novelist has created an atmosphere of adverse circumstances around the protagonists so that they can show their might and ability to win over the obstacles and reach the goal of success. The social and economic handicaps are described in details.

The protagonists understand the situation and steer clear of the impediments by virtue of their perseverance and practical wisdom. Devcharan overcomes the existing crippled state of agricultural life and leaves behind him the foot-prints which his grandson, Haricharan follows to emerge as the model of the best farmer.

Every novelist intends to convey a message of life through his novels. Sometimes he preaches the ethics of life directly as contextual descriptions. Mostly the writer expresses his basic stream of thoughts indirectly through the dialogues of the protagonist. In 'Pangu' both the methods have been adopted by the novelist. However, the novelist prefers to share his philosophic teachings with the readers through the dialogues and interactions of the protagonist with the other main characters. In his anxiety to find an able successor after him Devcharan counsels his grandson, Haricharan through his constant dialogues with him. In the novel chapters 4, 5 and 6 are full of such counselling conversations between the two. The dialogues reveal Devcharan's ideal character in the novel. Here the protagonist, Devcharan seems to impersonate the author himself. All his teachings and instructions represent the views of the writer. In this respect the character of Devcharan is presented before us as the epitome of social values. The novelist has portrayed him as an ideal character who is blessed with courage, fortitude, diligence and prudence.

In a novel the protagonist may be more than one main character. In 'Pangu' there are two protagonists- Devcharan and Haricharan. After the death of Devcharan Haricharan gladly takes over the yoke of the family-cart on his shoulder. He follows the patriarchal sermons to the letter and spirit. The novelist, through direct method of characterization, comments

on the successful struggles made by Haricharan for winning over the obstacles in the way of farming, "Ona, jai gatiye kisani taknik aagusan utaral tai hisabe kisan nahi utaral seho nahiye Kahal ja sakai, kiyo utaral wa nahi utaral, chadhal wa nahi chadhal muda Haricharan je battis-taintis barkhak jawan kisanak rupmen utarbe Kail." (The peasants could not avail the new techniques of agriculture perfectly but Haricharan, a youngman of thirty-two or thirty-three came forward to fully utilise new farming techniques.)

In characterisation the novelist introduces conflicts in the mind of the character. When a character confronts opposing forces, he undergoes a conflict of mind. The element of conflict is introduced to show how it creates tension and leads to resolution. It is rightly said, "No conflict, no story." Through the conflict and its resolution, the greatness of the character is revealed. His imitable qualities are displayed through such methods. Devcharan lives a life of conflict throughout. He overcomes the conflicting thoughts and conflicting situations with his patience, perseverance and prudence. He instils his virtues in his successor to enable him to lead a successful life. Haricharan accepts the crippled state of farming as a challenge and resolves to stand as a fighting sentinel in the farm land, just as a soldier does his duty in the freezing cold and scorching heat of the border area to serve his motherland.

Literally, characters are of two kinds-flat and round. Flat characters are one-dimensional. They are simple and uncomplicated. They do not change throughout the course of a work. They remain consistent with their initial portrayal. They serve as supporting roles moving the plot forward. By contrast round characters are two-dimensional. They are complex and multi-faceted. They undergo development and surprise the

reader with their actions and reactions. In the novels of Jagdish Prasad Mandal, we find mostly flat characters with their targeted mission of life. They do not surprise the reader. They act in accordance with the expectation of the reader. In 'Pangu' too both the main characters - Devcharan and Haricharan can be categorised as flat characters who follow the principles of life with their brave struggles against the crises and challenges of life.

A novelist has got more freedom in the creation of characters than a dramatist. He can introduce as many characters as he likes but a dramatist is restrained in this respect. In a drama there is only one main character and all others are subsidiary. But, in a novel main character may be more than one. In 'Pangu' we find that both Devcharan and Haricharan have equal importance in the context of the story. A novelist creates characters and embellishes them with such noble traits and human behaviour that the readers identify them with themselves in their ideologies. Good characters are the prototypes of the real idealistic persons. They are capable of benefitting society with their high ideas. In 'Pangu' Devcharan and Haricharan with their actions, thoughts and ideologies impart the message of life that untiring efforts are the only magic keys to success. The readers develop emotional bond with them and feel happy to think that what the two protagonists say and act is the secret of success in life.

As every literary work should have the qualities of 'Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram' (Truth, Goodness and Beauty), a novel too provides this message of life through its characters. The central character or the protagonist displays truth, goodness and beauty in his thoughts and actions and tries to establish such values in the society for the welfare of the

people. He impresses the reader with his veracious, philanthropic and aesthetic beliefs and deeds. In 'Pangu' Devcharan and Haricharan are embellished with these virtues to be called ideal characters in the novel.

(D) Theme

The theme of a novel is the underlying message that the novelist wants to convey. It is the critical belief of the writer about life which is either hidden in the plot or stated as contextual comments here and there regarding the events of the story by the novelist himself. The writer may express the theme of the novel through the dialogues of the characters as well. When a reader finishes the reading of a novel, he broods over the hidden thought of the story. Understanding the theme of a novel provides him the true pleasure of reading. He is overwhelmed with joy to discover the thought of life hidden under the surface of the story.

There is a purpose behind the writing of a novel. Although every literary work aims at providing entertainment to the readers, the ultimate goal of a novel is to impart a message of life. The message is enshrined in the text of the story. The novelist is not forthright in his description of the purpose behind writing the novel. He weaves out sequence of events with special attention to characterisation. It is for the readers to extract the theme from the story of the novel. The writer does not write a novel with the thought of propounding particular concept or philosophy of life but every novel reflects some thoughts or moral truths of life.

In 'Pangu', through the story of the crippled conditions of agriculture and Devcharan's victory over the handicaps and later Haricharan's successful performance in farming, the

novelist conceals the theme of struggles against obstacles. The reader has no difficulty in unveiling this hidden message of life. The novelist writes, "Devcharan kisani jenagi ke marmabhedi rahnau apan jinagi me pangu banal rahala, muda apan pangupanak karan ke bujhi apna ke ohi jinagi me samabesh karait parivarak gaarik jua ke kanheth aagu muhe khichait rahala, jaisan abhavoke kubhav nahi bujhi subhav bana jiban-basar karabe kelak, je apan sabh gun-sheel Haricharan ke daan-daichhana me dait ai duniya sa vida bhela." (Although Devcharan had a crippled life in spite of being an expert in it, he understood the reasons behind his crippledness and struggled hard to fight with it. He steered clear through thick and thin, shouldering the yoke of the family cart. Finally, he breathed his last, leaving the footprints of his life for Haricharan.)

Haricharan follows his footprints and by virtue of perseverance and practical wisdom rises to be crowned with the title of 'kisanbrind', the best farmer. In the words of the novelist, "ona ketbo pangupan Haricharanak aagu me kiya ne nach karai, muda kisanak samajme kisanbrind Kahebak adhikari tan achhiya" (Even if too many handicaps may try to hinder him, he has every right to be called 'kisan-brind', the farmer's crown in the society of farmers.)

The novelist analyses the reasons why the peasants are paralyzed. He says that the prevailing darkness in the society is both natural and artificial. The superstitious and conservative thoughts which grip the society are the main causes of man-made darkness. Life in villages seems burdensome. It is why the villagers are leaving their villages one after the other to earn livelihood for their family and are settling in some corner of the world. In the novel the writer deplores it and through the

character of Haricharan wants to say that this exodus should be stopped. When Devcharan asks his grandson what he wants to do in life, the latter replies, “Baba, apan kaaj huyai aaki ankar kaaj, ketau ta mehnatak phal bhetat. Tahume jakhan apna khet-pathar achhi takhan jan nokri karai jayab tan apan kheti-pathari kena hoyat?” (Grandpa, doing our work or other’s work will be rewarded with sweet fruits. As we have our own landed property how will the cultivation and the follow-up work be done if I go for a job?)

The writer in his referential comments on the events of the story suggests the theme of the novel. To explain what the structure of man’s life is he says that among the three basic needs of human beings food is the most essential necessity. The second basic want is suitable cloth. Again, we need houses lo live in. Besides these basic things today we require education, health, art and literature. He further says, “Nature provides land for food, water reservoir for water and atmosphere for air. But we have to exert to grow grains from land, make wells and tube-wells for water and keep the atmosphere clean for air.” The writer here underlines the need of will-power and perseverance. Work is worship-is an old saying. Self-help is the key to success We will have to forsake laziness and embrace hard work. In the novel Devcharan tells his wife, “...as we all are the progeny of man’s ancestry, we should not shirk from work.”

In the family life of human beings hierarchy plays an important role. The patriarch with his long experience of life wants to train up his progeny with the art and acumen of the family profession so that the cycle of life may continue well. Finding himself in the fourth stage of his life Devcharan expresses his concern, “Bau, akhan tak parivarak bhar apan sir saij gaarik jua me kanha laga khichait elon, muda aab o

saamarth nahi rahal jekar khagta parivarke achhi.” (My child, I have shouldered the responsibility of the whole family by this time but now I don't have the might which the family needs.) It is essential for the descendants to honour their ancestors by obeying their advice. Haricharan responds positively, “...aahan kichhu bheliyai taiyo ta dhan-gahum daun karaibala khohak jotal barad jakan mehaut chhihe. Jena-jena khohpar ahan ghumbai tena tena ne ahink laagal bichalo aa paitak barad jakan hamhu sabh ghumbai.” (But you are our guide and mentor. you are like the trained polar ox in the thrashing of paddy and wheat crops while we are like middle and fringe oxen to make rounds at your leadership.)

Thus, we find that the novelist has tried to convey the theme of the novel through both direct and indirect methods. The reader has not to strain his mind to unearth the hidden gem of the novel.

(E) style

In a novel style refers to the way an author uses language to convey his\her story. It is essentially how the story is told. It is the manner of expressing thought in language. It is the reflection of the author’s individuality. It is style which makes one author different from the other. The key aspects of a novel’s style are diction, sentence-structure, figurative language, tone and point of view. There are several types of writing styles in literature- descriptive style, satirical style, expository style, persuasive style, Gothic style, minimalistic style and stream of consciousness style. In English literature the examples of distinct styles include Virginia woolf’s stream of consciousness narrative, Mark Twain’s colloquial and humorous language, Hemingway’s concise and direct prose and William Faulkner’s complex and experimental sentences.

The greatest poet of Maithili literature, Vidyapati wrote centuries ago- 'Desil vayana sab jan mittha, te taisan jampao abahattha.' (Folk dialects are sweet to all persons, so I compose in Abhattha, the popular rural language.) Being an inhabitant of a village in the remote corner of Mithila and having lived a very long life of a peasant and social worker Jagdish Prasad Mandal has got proficiency in the rustic Maithili language which he uses in his literary works as the representative voice of the common Maithil masses. He is a master of simple rustic Maithili prose. He writes with extreme simplicity about the lives and aspirations of average middle and lower middle class Maithils. In 'Pangu' the novelist has chosen to use the language spoken in the far-flung remote areas of Mithila. Maintaining his theory of realism in both theme and style he has used the spoken language in the novel to popularize its attachment to ground level. His simplicity of expression is obvious in the conversational language of the novel. His prose is unaffected by the splendours of figurative style which the urban Maithils use.

Jagdish babu knows that Maithili is not a bilingual expression and it is not a descendant of Hindi. It has its own distinct entity. In this context we remember a great novelist of Hindi from Mithila itself, Sri Phanishwar Nath Renu who used profusely certain dialectical terms in his novels which enhanced the beauty of his literary works. In the same way, in 'Pangu' Maithili transcription of some Hindi words provides an extra flavour to the literary style of the novelist. It is interesting to mention some words like paryas (attempt), vekti (individual), bebdhan (hindrance), nawn (name), pubhar (eastward) etc.

The writer entertains the reader with his experimental

usage of diction. He presents a pleasuresome reading with his word-play of kukor, sukor and nakor. Describing Sitapur he writes, "Gaon ta gaun chhi, muda ohu me ne sukor, kukor aa nakorak gun seho achhiye. (A village is a village but even here there are features of well-designed, ill-designed and un-designed shapes.) Again, we find a word-play in abhav, kubhav and subhav (need, hindrance, aid) when in the last chapter of the novel the novelist narrates how Devcharan lived his life by treating his indigency not as hindrance but aid and left the footprints of his virtuous life for Haricharan. Here is the quote from the novel. "Abhavon ke kubhav nahi bujhi subhav bana jeevan vasar karbe kela je apan sabh gun-sheel Haricharan ke daan dakshina me dait ai duniya san vida bhela."

The writer, Jagdish Prasad Mandal uses descriptive style in his stories and novels. He provides elaborate details to create rich imagery for the reader. He depicts imagery to create a clear picture in the mind of the reader. It helps the reader become more connected to the writing. For this the writer employs literary techniques such as similes and metaphors. In the episode of the wrangle of the mango orchard the writer describes how Balchan's men attacked the mango pluckers- "singheshwer ke gaal me chaat lagite jetek nabturia chhal bhua jakan baanki chaaru par lataik hain-hain sabh ke chotiyabaya lagal, muda ek dis jahina marik chotsan chotayal gahuman saanp jakan paancho phuphkaar kaati rahal chhal tahina dosar dis ganguari saanp janka samajok sipahi sabh siti bajaiya rahal chhal." (As Balchan slapped Singhesar on both his cheeks, the other youngsters pounced upon the rest four of his group like a swarm of itching insects but, on one hand, all the five assaulted persons were hissing like the wounded cobra snake, on the other hand, the volunteers of the society were whistling like amphisbaena.)

Style in fiction is a writer's verbal identity which he or she constructs by choosing various words and putting those words together in particular ways. Jagdish Prasad Mandal has the commendable characteristics of simplicity, flow and coherence in his narrative style. In the dialogue between Devcharan and Haricharan the novelist amuses the reader with the magnificent figurative language. Let us view some extracts of the conversation between the two. Devcharan tells Haricharan, "Bau Hari, akhan tu nav-udit surya jakan lauhit laal ta nahi muda pirit piraunchh lalik rup me jarur chhah." (Dear Hari, at present you are not as fiery red as the newly- risen Sun but you have the glowing ruddiness of the Sun behind the horizon.) Again, his teaching of life is veiled in metaphorical words, "Bau, akhan tak parivarak bhar apan sir saji gaarik jua me kanha laga khichait elon." (My child, I have shouldered the responsibility of the whole family as drawing the yoke of the cart.) Haricharan submissively calls him "the trained polar ox in the threshing of paddy and wheat crops." (dhaan-gahum daun karaibala khohak jotal barad jakan mehauta)

In his descriptive style the novelist combines figures of speech and idioms to provide word-music for the readers. He describes Devcharan's happiness over Haricharan's positive thinking in this way, 'Jete vichar me gambhirta abait jain, tete man mudit san pramudit hoit jain.' (As he developed gravity in his thought, his happiness encompassed larger dimension.) The novelist aptly makes use of certain idioms and proverbs prevalent in common parlance. Some of them are listed here- 'Jaih bhojaitni saih chataitni,' 'Chhan me chhanak', 'barad bahailai aa vivekvan kahailai' and 'Sarkari kaaj aa jethua garek kono bharos nahi.' (The host is the guest himself/herself, a bolt from the blue, it matters to do, not to talk, government work and May cloud cannot be trusted.) ❑

Appropriateness of the Title

The title of a literary work is the name given to a book of poetry, drama, novel short-stories and essays. It is an introduction of the text, as it reflects its theme or central idea. The reader visualises the contents or the text of the work of art in the title and feels curiosity to go through it. That is why the writer takes special care in the naming of his work. A good title offers a glimpse of the work's content. It may be symbolical or literal. Many authors use quotations from literature as the title for their works. There is a lot of creative freedom in providing a suitable and meaningful title to a piece of literary work.

In a poetry book generally all the poems collected therein have their titles which are often symbolical, suggestive and introductory. Some poems are known by their first line or their poem number. The collection of poems bears an overall title to signify the general theme or the name of the poet. Some of the famous books of English poetry are as follows– 'Shakespeare's Sonnets' by William Shakespeare "The complete works of Edgar Allan Poe, 'Leaves of Grass' by Walt Whitman, 'Gitanjali' by Rabindra Nath Tagore, 'Paradise Lost', "Paradise Regained' by John Milton.

In the genre of drama, the title sometimes represents the story and sometimes the character of the play. Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of English literature maintains different principles of offering titles to his comedies and tragedies. His tragedies are named after the heroes and in some cases both

hero and heroine. His tragic masterpieces like ‘Hamlet’, ‘Macbeth’, ‘King Lear', ‘Othello’ and ‘Julius Caesar’ bear the name of the hero in their titles. ‘Romeo and Juliet’ and ‘Antony and Cleopatra’ have the names of both hero and heroine in their titles. On the other hand, Shakespeare’s comedies have such fanciful titles as ‘Much Ado about Nothing’, ‘As you Like It’, ‘Twelfth Night’, ‘A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream’ and ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost’.

In a novel the title helps readers identify and remember the book. It gives them a sense of what the story is about. A good title captures a reader’s attention and allures him to learn more about the story. It may refer to the main character or the main theme of the novel. It may create suspense in the reader or prove a puzzle for him to be solved by reading the whole novel. We may visualise the varieties of titles in the novels of English writers. Some of the best novels in English literature are listed here to observe their titles- ‘A Passage to India’ by E. M. Forster, ‘The Guide’ by R. K. Narayan, ‘Sons and Lovers’ by D.H. Lawrence, ‘The Mayor of Casterbridge’ by Thomas Hardy, ‘The Portrait of a Lady’ by Henry James, ‘The Good Earth’ by Pearl S. Buck, ‘The Sun also Rises’ by Ernest Hemingway, ‘Hard Times’ by Charles Dickens, ‘To the Light House’ by Virginia Woolf, ‘Tom Jones’ by Henry Fielding, ‘Pride and Prejudice’ by Jane Austen, ‘Wuthering Heights’ by Emily Bronte etc.

There is a wide variety of short story titles. In some stories the central theme or a character’s name is represented, while in some others the title is formed with the catchy phrases from within the story itself. We may refer to some titles of short stories thus- ‘The Gift of the Magi’ by O. Henry, ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’ by Edgar Allen Poe, ‘The Love of a Good Woman’

by Alice Munro, 'The Kite' by Somerset Maugham, 'Three Questions' by Leo Tolstoy, 'A Work of Art' by Anton Chekov, 'An Astrologer's Day' by R.K. Narayan etc. If there is a collection of short stories, the short story writer generally names the book on the title of the most important short story in the collection. If all the stories in the book are based on similar theme, the writer gives a separate title symbolising the theme. The titles of essays or collection of essays too vary widely as they represent mostly the subject-matter of the prose-pieces in simple or figurative phrases.

Jagdish Prasad Mandal's literary works mostly have their titles representing the central theme. His novels and short stories bear the caption on the main idea of the works. The novel 'Pangu' is no exception. As a matter of fact, the novel focuses on the crippled agricultural conditions prevalent in Mithila region and the brave victory over the challenges with wise and industrious management of farming system by the protagonist of the novel. The novelist enlists our sympathy for the hungry lot of Sitapur by his exclusive narration of their pitiable plight. Hundreds of landless families did not get adequate farm-work to earn their livelihood. So, they often took recourse to exodus to other states for sustenance. The writer deplores that now when all the facilities of basic needs are available in cities and towns, thousands of villages like Sitapur have nothing to utilise the physical and mental man-power of the workers rendering them unemployed and hungry and promoting exodus.

The title of the novel is apt and appropriate in view of the theme of the novel. India is traditionally described as an agricultural country. But, in Mithila, agriculture remained crippled both in pre-independence and post-independence

period. The agricultural economy, being the only source of livelihood, remained wretched on account of the ravages of the *Kosi*-flood causing endless miseries to the poor people. The *Kosi*-flood in 1958 not only made them homeless but brought them to the verge of starvation. In the drought of 1967, many persons starved to death while a great number of them saved their lives by unearthing and eating '*bisandh*', the root of a watery plant. The sensitivity of the writer gives vent to the feeling of the crying need of improvement in the living conditions of the economically handicapped villagers of Mithila. The writer says, "Jahina krishi kshetra pangu banal chhal, tahina kheti par jeevan japan karai bala kisano bonihar pangu banale chhal. (Just as agricultural field was paralyzed, the peasants and labourers living on agriculture remained crippled.)

The significance of the title lies mainly on the writer's thematic proposition how to win over the crippledness of the farming through the assiduous and prudent handling of farming system to win over the obstacles in the way. Struggling against the prevalent crippledness Haricharan paved his way to the path of prosperity by virtue of courage, patience and perseverance. He followed the footprints of his grandfather, Devcharan who struggled throughout his life successfully bearing the yoke of the family cart. The novelist narrates how Devcharan lived his life by treating his indigency not as hindrance but aid and left the footprints of his virtuous life for Haricharan. Here is the quote from the novel, "Abhavon ke kubhav nahi bujhi subhav bana jeevan vasar karabe kela je apan sabh gun-sheel Haricharan ke daan dakshina me dait ai duniya sa vida bhela." Haricharan managed consolidation of plots by exchanges with other peasants. He worked hard with his wife in the field by introducing scientific farming with improved seeds and modern

irrigation facilities. He was hailed as kisan-brind, the best farmer.

The terms 'pangu' and 'pangupan' have been used frequently in the novel. As the story of the novel revolves round crippledness in agriculture, the novelist makes use of the terms 'pangu' and 'pangupan' more than ten times. Here are some extracts with the terms-

(1) "krishi kshetra me vishal sadhan achhi je ohina-k-ohina 'Pangu' banal rahal." chap- 4, page- 65. (There are ample resources in the agricultural field which remained completely crippled.)

(2, 3) "Takhan yaih je 'pangupan' rahal okar purti karait, oya 'pangupan' ke maitbait jahina chirai akash me swachhand jibanak sans lait uraiye tahina parivaroke banaib chhah." chap-6, page- 88. (You have to do away with the helplessness of the family and make the family as happy as a bird flying in the sky.)

(4) "Devcharanak vichar suni jena sabh kiyo 'pangupanak' gambhirta ke bujhi gel, tahina sabh kiyo sabh dis najair dourbait gambhir hoit chupchap uthi-uthi apan-apan jivan kriya dis badhai lagal." chap- 6, page- 88. (As all of them listened to the instructions of Devcharan and understood the seriousness of crippledness, they looked around, rose up silently with gravity and proceeded to perform their routined activities)

(5) "Raudi-dahik khel sale-sal chalite achhi, jaisan apna aitham krishi karya 'Pangu' banal achhi." Chap- 8, page- 101. (The onslaught of drought and flood every year has rendered agriculture crippled here.)

(6) "Atma-nirbhar bhojanak mamla me jarur bhel muda krishi paidavar me 'pangupan' banale rahal." chap-8, page-102. (With rapid growth in agricultural yield, the country

became self-dependent in food grains. In spite of it the crippledness in agricultural production could not be fully eradicated.)

(7, 8) "Ona, Devcharan kisani jinagik marmbhedi rahnau apan jinagi me 'Pangu' banal rahala, muda apan 'pangupanak' karanke bujhi Davcharan apna ke ohi jinagi me samabesh Karait parivarak garik jua ke Kanhaith agu muhe khichait rahala." chap- 9, page- 106. (Although Devcharan had a crippled agricultural life in spite of being an expert in it, he understood the reasons behind his crippledness and struggled hard to fight with it. He steered clear through thick and thin shouldering the yoke of the family cart.)

(9) "Apan sadhak je kriya achhi taime ta Haricharan apan saphal swarup dekhi rahal achhi, muda aaguk jinagike dekhait Haricharan jakhan apan brihat swarup dekhai lagaiye takhan 'pangupan' aagume nachite chhai." chap- 9, page- 108. (Haricharan can see his success in his activities of the present time but when he thinks of the future, he finds crippledness once again gripping him.)

(10) "Ona, ketbo 'pangupan' Haricharanak aagu me kiyai ne nach karai, muda kisanak samaj me kisan-brindak adhikari ta achhiye." chap 9, page- 108. (Even if too many handicaps may try to hinder Haricharan, he has every right to be called kisan-brind, the farmer's crown in the society of farmers.)

In this way the descriptive text of the novel throws much light on the wretched disability of the poor peasants. The novel ends with the optimistic note of victory over crippledness. Thus, the title is quite apt and appropriate, as it stands for the theme of the novel.

The title reminds us of the famous oft-quoted verse of the 'Ramcharit Manas' written by Tulsidas- "Mook hoya baachaal,

pangu chadhai girivar gahan”. (The dumb can become eloquent and the crippled can climb mountain top.) Tulsidas refers to the above situation by the mercy of God. In the novel Godly power is interpreted as one’s perseverance and will-power. It is rightly said that God helps those who help themselves. As a matter of fact, self-help is the key to success. It embraces the mercy of God with it. Haricharan girds up his loin to face the impediments in the way of farming and with his tireless efforts and positive thinking he wins over the crippledness of old farming system with his new vision of green revolution. The title of the novel truly represents this central idea of the novel.❑

Conclusion

In common parlance criticism is erroneously used in the sense of condemning or finding faults with others, but in true sense of the term it means the formation or construction of an opinion or a judgement about the positive or negative qualities of someone or something. Literary criticism is the practice of analyzing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature. It involves examining a text's elements such as its structure, language, themes and historical context to understand its meaning and significance. It examines the social and economic structures depicted in literature. It places a text within its historical context to understand its meaning and significance. In essence, literary criticism deepens our understanding and appreciation of a text while also sharpening our critical thinking skills.

In literature criticism is one of its six vital parts named as poetry, drama, novel, short story, essay and criticism. There are many types of literary criticism. Some of the more common are traditional criticism, sociological criticism, new criticism, feminist criticism, marxist criticism and media criticism. New criticism focusses on the text itself, analysing its formal elements and language without considering external factors. Historical criticism examines the text in relation to its historical context. Feminist criticism analyses literature through a feminist lens while psycho-analytic criticism applies psychological theories to understand characters and their motivations. In English literature Aristotle is widely considered the father of literary criticism. His work 'poetics' establishes

many key concepts and principles still relevant in literary studies today. John Dryden is regarded as the father of modern literary criticism. Besides them other prominent literary critics are S.T. Coleridge. Samuel Johnson, Mathew Arnold and T.S Eliot.

Although every literary genre (poetry, drama, novel, short-story and essay) has, more or less, the same criteria for critical evaluation, there are some distinct yardsticks too for them. A novel is a relatively long work of narrative fiction normally written in prose form and published as a book. The key elements of a novel are the plot, setting, character, theme and style. The literary criticism of a novel involves analyzing and evaluating its various aspects. The purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of the work and its place in literature. Critics carefully examine the text, paying attention to details like language, imagery, symbolism and structure. They analyse the central ideas and messages conveyed in the novel. They evaluate the development, motivations and relationships of the characters. They assess the structure and flow of the narrative. They analyse the author's use of language, tone and literary devices. They may examine how the novel portrays the social, political and cultural landscape of its time. A critic of a novel evaluates its artistic quality, originality and effectiveness in achieving its goals. He forms an opinion about the novel's strengths and weaknesses. He may compare the novel to other works and discuss its place within the broader literary landscape. He may decide its type.

In this book of critical study 'Pangu' (The Crippled), a Maithili novel written by Jagdish Prasad Mandal and awarded by Sahitya Akademi in 2021 has been analysed and interpreted on the yardstick of the key elements of a novel. Discussions on

the different aspects of the novel have been made in the eight chapters of the book. First of all, a brief introductory sketch of the life and works of the novelist, Jagdish Prasad Mandal, has been portrayed to provide a background to the text and its critical review. The writer, Sri Jagdish Prasad Mandal, the 76-year- old resident of central Mithila learns the ins and outs of the entire Mithila region through the long span of his active agricultural life, his sensitivity to social activities, his love of communist ideas and wide travels. Born on 5th June, 1947 in a lower middle-class family of Berma village of Madhubani district he had a good schooling which enabled him to obtain M.A degrees in two subjects. With his leaning towards communistic ideologies and zest for social activities he did not prefer to get a govt. job. He took to agricultural pursuits and as an active member of the communist party he struggled hard to fight against the prevalent social ills and evils. For this he had to go to jail several times. It was in 2000 that he turned to writing books of Maithili literature. He gave expression to his realistic experiences in different genres of literature. His rapid flow of literary creations has resulted in his rainbow-world of literary works. At least in the frequency of literary publications he is unprecedented in Maithili literature.

Before discussing 'Pangu' from different angles of literary criteria in subsequent chapters the plot of the novel is summarily presented in the chapter "Synopsis of 'Pangu'". The chronological story of the novel begins with a peasant named Devcharan of Sitapur who had got ancestral property of three acres of land. The land was earlier seized by auction from his ancestor by a landlord of the village who allowed him to till the land and give one fourth of the harvest to the landlord. Later due to a quarrrel in the landlord's family over the issue of the elder son, singhesar's marriage with a prostitute at the age of

sixty, there was an offer to Devcharan to purchase the land from the landlord. Devcharan afforded to purchase the land for one hundred and fifty rupees by selling his pair of calves. But he was worried about the well-being of the descendent lineage to see his son, Radhacharan dull and inactive. However, the birth of his grandson, Haricharn brought a ray of hope for him. Haricharan grew in years and could get education only up to middle school for lack of resources. With the proper guidance of his grandfather he worked hard in agricultural activities. Later he was married to a caring and industrious girl. After Devcharan's death he, with the active support of his wife, brought about green revolution and proved himself the best farmer of the region.

In the chapter captioned "Critical Appraisal" an over-all review of the novel has been summarized. As a matter of fact, the novel is a Mithila-Darshan, an overview of Mithila. It is a graphic and picturesque descriptive account of the crippled agriculture-based economy of Mithila, a major chunk of Bihar. The novelist has laid much stress on the socio-economic life of the pre-independence and post-independence Mithila. He has artistically presented a varied and detailed description of the geographical, social, economic and cultural pictures of this significant region. The fauna and flora of Sitapur representing Mithila is pictured with scientific accuracy. The crippledness resulting from natural disasters and the prevalent social evils like ignorance, superstition, caste feeling and conservative thoughts has been highlighted. A brief discussion of the novel on the basis of the five key elements of a novel has been entertained. Comments on the significance of the title of the novel has been provided here.

The following chapter deals with an important aspect of

this novel as being a topography of Mithila. The novel begins with the description of Sitapur which is the representative village of Mithila. The description extends from page- 1 to page- 32 of the novel at one stretch. The novelist narrates that the northern border of Mithila is beautifully fenced by the mountain ranges which are diversified by both the greater Himalayas and kailash mountain with lovely Mansarovar lake in it. Again, the southern border of Mithila is built by a group of rivers including the sacred Ganga which has holy banks like Sultanganj and Simariya ghats. We find here the fauna and flora of Sitapur described in full details. The village with almost a thousand acres of land with ponds, lakes and rivers produces all kinds of grains, fruits and vegetables. Different kinds of fishes, domestic animals, trees, flowers and fruits are graphically described. The detailed lists of all these things are the testimony of the writer's intimate personal knowledge from his real-life association before holding the writer's pen.

In the fifth chapter of this book of critical study the social, economic and educational portrait of Mithila has been unveiled. The novelist refers to the antiquity of Sitapur how some eight years ago two persons arrived there with their families and settled there. Today the village with its area of one thousand *bighas* shelters eight hundred families of about five thousand people. There are five joint families even today. Most of the families have agriculture as their profession. The village is inhabited by the people of different castes. The middle castes are ahead of others in terms of both the number of castes and population. Caste and communal feelings have got such a bad impact on society that rifts and dissensions are visible from top to bottom. Similarly, the economic and educational conditions of the village have been vividly highlighted. The dwellings of the haves and have-nots speak of their economic distinction.

The poor educational condition of the village can be seen in the description that there is only a lower primary school here. Haricharan, the central character of the novel could not get even high school education because his family could not afford for the hostel expenditure of the school very far-off from Sitapur.

The subsequent chapter analyses a very significant aspect of the novel, namely the crippled agricultural conditions. The plot of the novel throws vivid light on the wretched plight of those associated with farming. It also reveals that cultivation is the only means of livelihood in the region. The natural disasters of flood and drought affect agriculture badly. The ravages of the *Kosi*, *Kamla* and some other rivers cause heavy devastations to the standing crops. The rivers suddenly engulf the villages eroding the habitation of the residents and making them homeless. Sometimes drought renders the villagers to the verge of starvation. In the field of agriculture vast resources are available which remain crippled. Neither land nor water are properly utilized. In 1967 starving labourers saved their lives by unearting *bisandh*, the root of a watery plant. Thousands of villages like Sitapur has nothing to utilise the physical and mental man-power of the workers, rendering them unemployed and hungry and promoting exodus.

The seventh chapter of the novel deals with the evaluation of the novel on the yardsticks of the key elements of a novel, i.e. setting, plot, character, theme and style. The novelist has created a long and detailed background for the plot of the novel. He has left no stone unturned to provide a befitting atmosphere to the story. It is no exaggeration to state that the plot of the novel remains a bit shadowed under the larger interest of the novelist to highlight the minute details of social,

economic, educational and cultural aspects of Mithila life. Jagdish Prasad Mandal is well-versed in the art of the structure of the plot in his novels. In 'Pangu' the events are presented in logical sequence. First of all, Haricharan is introduced and then through flashback method his ancestral history is presented in details. The novelist manages to interrelate the story with detailed referential descriptions. Here lies the artistic brilliance of the novelist. Every event of the story is interrupted by the lengthy contextual comments. But nowhere the interest of the readers in the story of Haricharan flags. The novelist highlights the two protagonists, Devcharan and Haricharan through their constant dialogues. In the novel chapter- 4, 5 and 6 are full of such counselling dialogues between the grandfather and the grandson. The character of Devcharan is presented as the epitome of social values. Similarly, Haricharan stands for patience, perseverance and prudence.

The theme of the novel is unveiled directly and even indirectly by the novelist. The writer conveys the message of life through his referential comments and also through the dialogues of the patriarch, Devcharan and the grandson, Haricharan in the story. He underlines the need of will-power and perseverance to win over the obstacles in the way of life. Self-help is the key to success. We should not shirk from work. The theme of tireless struggles against the impediments to be crowned with victory has been messaged through the story of Devcharan and Haricharan. The writer, Jagdish Prasad Mandal has the commendable characteristics of simplicity, flow and coherence in his narrative style. In 'Pangu' he has chosen to use the language spoken in the far-flung remote areas of Mithila. The writer has got proficiency in the rustic Maithili language which he uses as the representative voice of the common Maithil masses. He makes experimental usage of diction. In his

descriptive style he enterains word-play to create poetic feeling in prose.

In the 8th, that is, the preceding chapter of this book of critical analysis, the justification of the title of ‘Pangu’ has been considerd and found that the title is significantly meaningful and well-named. It truly represents the theme of the crippled agricultural conditions of Mithila. In the novel the novelist narrates the story of Haricharan how, struggling against the prevalent situations of crippledness, he paved his way to the path of prosperity by virtue of courage, patience and perseverance. The terms ‘pangu’ and ‘pangupan’ have been used in the novel more than ten times. In view of the thematic proposition of the novelist there can be no better title for his novel. The title creates curiosity among readers to go through the text and hence it is apt and appropriate.

As a matter of fact, the theme of the novel reveals a great truth of life that inertness and laziness are the greatest hurdles in the way of success. Life is not a bed of roses. We have to face impediments in every field of life. We should accept the challenges of life. We should not be dispirited with the formidable problems which confront us in our struggles. With courage, patience, fortitude, perseverance and prudence we should tread the rugged path to reach the goal of life. “Nothing is impossible in this world”, Napoleon said. We should remember this dictum and be assured that hard work brings success. Our deeds and actions give real meaning to our life. It is rightly said that God helps those who help themselves. In fact, self-help is the key to success. It embraces the mercy of God with it. Our ‘karma’ (work) should be our ‘dharma’ (worship). This is the message of life imparted through the story of the novel. The novelist has presented the anatomy of

life to find out the remedies for ills and evils prevalent in social life.

In 'Pangu' the central character, Devcharan is the prototype of the novelist himself. He represents the views of the writer in toto. Whatever messages Devchavan imparts to his grandson through his counselling classes are the views and ideologies held by the novelist himself. When he tells his grandson "As we all are the progeny of man's ancestory, one should not shirk from work". and "you have to do away with the helplessness of the family and make the family as happy and free as a bird flying in the sky", he reveals the anatomy of life. In his contextual comments the novelist directly sketches the structure of man's life. He says that among the three basic needs of human beings food is the most essential one. Cloth and houses are our necessary requirements. Besides them we need education, health, art and literature. He further says, "Nature provides land for food, water-reservoir for water and atmosphere for air. But we have to exert to grow grains, make wells and tube-wells for water and keep the atmosphere clean for air." Shirking from laziness we should gird up our loins against all odds and with our will-power and perseverance get success in achieving our desired objectives. On account of these philosophical concepts of life being the central ethos of the Sahitya Akademi-awarded novel 'Pangu', this book of critical study is titled 'Anatomy of Life.'

Glossary

aanta- a kind of custard apple (annona riticulata.) its pulp is reddish yellow, sweetish and very soft.

agahan- also called margshirsha.it is the ninth month of the Hindu calendar corresponding to Nov/Dec in the Gregorian calendar

asesar- tax-collector working on behalf of the landlord as village guard (chowkidar)

ashadh- the fourth month of the Hindu calendar corresponding to June/July in Gregorian calendar.

bakast- the land seized by the landlord from peasants for nonpayment of rent.

barahil- an official of the landlord.

bhagtai- ceremonious invocation to gods and goddesses.

bhakur- Katla fish called bhakur in India and Nepal. it is an important South Asian freshwater fish. It is a delicious and nutritious dish.

bhoodan- charity offering of land.

bhuna- the fish is on the verge of extinction because of water pollution. it is a very delicious dish.

bigha-	one bigha= 0.62 acres.
bisandh-	the root of a watery plant.
chabhacha-	small pond, not very deep.
chamar-	a lower Dalit caste having the traditional caste-based profession of shoe-making.
chaumasiya-	for four months.
chauri-	a vast lower tract of land where water logs.
dedhwa-	a small-sized hill stream fish common in Nepal and Bihar.
doh-dawar-	big ditches full of water
dom-	a lower Hindu caste in india having the caste-based profession of hog-rearing and making bamboo utensils.
dusadh-	a lower Hindu caste with the surname of 'paswan'.
gaichi-	a barred spring eel, a snake- like fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids and protein.
ganda-	one ganda consists of four in number.
genhari-	an edible herb of small green leaves.
ghauka-	a kind of edible green leaves
ghonghi-	a small snail-like creature found in ponds and rivers in the rainy season.
ichna-	a prawn fish, a crustacean with a skull.
jaith-	wooden pole in the centre of a pond taken to be the wedded male partner of the pond in olden days.
karin-	a wooden 8-10 feet long implements used for irrigation.

kamla- a river of north Bihar.

khatiyan- farmland record.

kirtan- group singing of Hindu devotional songs.

kochadhi- small water reservoir

kosi- a great river of Nepal and Bihar.

kotri- indian name for the fish Tor of the carps (cyprinidael) family.

lichi- a monotypic taxon and the sole member in the genus litchi in the soapberry family.

mahanth- the bachelor head-priest of a temple with a big landed property.

mara- a species of mackerel in the scombred family of order perciformes.

marua- finger millet, a flavourful grain with a high protein content.

mushar- a lower Hindu caste.

nain- a species of ray-finned fish in the genus cerrhenus.

navah- 9-day long Hindu religious rite of chanting the name of gods and goddesses.

nichras- low-lying land where water logs.

patwari- an official of the landlord.

patua- a plant identified with corchorus tridens from the tiliaceae family.

pothi- a small silverbarb fish.

raj darbhanga- a Maithil Brahmin dynasty, the rulers of territories that were part of the Mithila

region falling within India.

raiyat- peasant.

rohu- a species of carp family, a delicious dish in Bengal and Bihar.

sanichara- remuneration to teachers on week-end (on Saturday.)

satyug- according to Hindu scriptures time revolves in four ages- Satyug, Treta, dwapar and kaliyug.

saura- a sole fish of medium firm texture.

sikmi batai- share-cropping without ownership of the land.

shivling- a white yellowish flower blossoming on a plant.

treta- according to Hindu scriptures time revolves in four ages- Satyug, Treta, Dwapar and Kaliyug. We live in Kaliyug.

yagya- sacrificial offering in Hindu religion.

zamindar- landlord.

Notes